THINGS PAST AND PRESENT

A Study on the Setting of the Epistle of Barnabas

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Epistle of Barnabas, included in the collection of Apostolic Fathers, is an early christian text composed betweed AD 70–135, today mostly known for its anti-Judaism. It enjoyed some popularity in the early church, being for example included in Codex Sinaiticus. The purpose of this work is to treat in depth a set of introductory questions, which rarely receive in-depth treatments: unity, form, dating and provenance.

In the past interpolatory theories have been proposed to explain some incoherencies in the text. There's also an abrupt transition in Barn. 17 from theological to ethical teaching, a section known as the Two Ways, and an ancient Latin verion omits the Two Ways section. Nevertheless the text shows highly unified style and the Two Ways themes are present throughout. The Latin version is clearly secondary. The text should be treated as unity.

Despite clear epistolary features, it's often been suggested that the text isn't a true letter but a treatise. The epistolary features have been explained as fiction, pseudepigraphy or following literary conventions. As the epistle is anonymous but includes repeating personal references, no clear parallel exists. The explanations given for the epistolary features are unsatisfactory, and today the text is often recognized as a real letter.

Various more precise datings have been suggested based on allusions in chapters Barn. 4 (10 kings) and Barn. 16 (temple). When evaluated, all the suggestions are revealed to be problematic, including the lately popular ones based on the Hadrianic temple of Jupiter, which might have never existed. Its best to settle with the range AD 70–135.

Various locations have been suggested as the origin of the epistle with many different lines of evidence. These are handled in detail, including the more exotic ones. The insight that a letter has both an origin and a destination makes it possible to settle one of these: The destination must have been in Egypt based on the early reception of the text there.

The main contributions of this work are settling the destination of the epistle and bringing the problems of the dating based on the Hadrianic temple to light. Evaluating these questions is an important basis for reconstructing the purpose of the epistle. Also a couple of interesting subjects for future study were noticed along the way.

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Tiivistelmä – Referat
Barnabaan kirje, joka kuuluu Apostolisiin isiin, on varhaiskristillinen teksti, joka ajoittuu vuosiin 70–135. Se muistetaan usein juutalaisvastaisuudestaan. Ensimmäisinä vuosisatoina se oli paikoin suosittu teksti, ja se sisältyykin esimerkiksi Codex Sinaiticukseen. Tämän työn tavoitteena on tutkia joukkoa johdanto-opillisia kysymyksiä: yhtenäisyyttä, kirjallisuuslajia, ajoitusta ja alkuperäseutua.

Tekstin tiettyjä epäjohdonmukaisuuksia selitettiin aikanaan redaktiokriittisillä hypoteeseilla. Huomionarvoinen on myös luvussa 17 oleva jyrrkä taite opillisen ja eettisen osuuden välissä. Varhainen latinankielinen käännös ei sisällä tätä jälkimmäistä osuutta, joka tunnetaan myös nimellä Kaksi tietä. Kirjeen teksti on kuitenkin tyylillisesti yhtenäinen ja Kahden tien opetuksen teemat näkyvät myös alkuosassa. Latinankielinen käännös on toissijainen. Kirjettä tulee pitää yhtenäisenä.

Huolimatta tekstissä olevista kirjeen piirteistä, sen on usein ehdotettu olevan ennemminkin tutkielma. Kirjemuoto on selitetty fiktiona, pseudepigrafiana tai kirjallisten traditioiden seuraamisena. Koska kirje toisaalta on anonyymi, mutta kuitenkin sisältää paljon henkilökohtaisia kommentteja, vastaavia vertailutekstejä ei löydy. Kirjemuodolle annetut selitykset ovat epätyydyttäviä, ja nykyään teksti usein tunnustetaan oikeaksi kirjeeksi.

Perustuen luvuissa 4 ja 16 oleviin vihjauksiin kirjeelle on ehdotettu useita tarkempia ajoituksia. Kaikista näistä kuitenkin paljastuu lähemmässä tarkastelussa ongelmia, mukaanlukien viime aikoina suositusta ehdotuksesta, joka perustuu Hadrianuksen rakentamaan Jupiterin temppeliin – jota ei kuitenkaan kenties koskaan ollut olemassa. On paras tyytyä vuosiin 70–135.

Monia eri seutuja on ehdotettu kirjeen alkuperäksi hyvin erilaisin perustein. Nämä käytiin yksityiskohtaisesti läpi, huomioiden myös harvinaisemmat perusteet. Koska teksti on kirje, lähettäjän ja vastaanottajan sijainti ovat irrallisia kysymyksiä. Tätä ymmärrystä hyödyntäen toinen näistä voidaan ratkaista: kirje on lähetetty Egyptiin, koska se tunnettiin varhain lähinnä siellä.

Tämän tutkimuksen merkittävimmät tulokset ovat kirjeen vastaanottajan sijainnin ratkaiseminen ja Hadrianuksen rakentaman temppelin historiallisten ongelmien esiintuominen. Johdanto-opillisten kysymysten tarkastelu on tärkeä lähtökohta kirjeen tarkoituksen tutkimukselle. Ohessa tässä tarkastelussa löytyi pari mielenkiintoista uutta tutkimusaihetta

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νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἐπιτελέσατε

Contents

1 Introduction

The Epistle of Barnabas is an early Christian writing composed between AD 70–135, in the Greek speaking parts of the Roman Empire. It enjoyed some popularity in the early church, being for example included in Codex Sinaiticus. Since 17th century it has been published in the collection of Apostolic Fathers. The text is preserved in its entirety in its original Greek and a Latin translation. The author has utilized earlier sources. Judaism is the subject of the epistle in one way or another.

Little more can be said without running into disputed issues. The precise date is notoriously controversial, and providence doesn't fare much better. The designation *epistle* is in itself problematic, as there is no concensus on the literary form. The unity of the text isn't always accepted, with interpolatory theories being popular especially earlier. More recently the text has been judged a incoherent collection of sources, which has an editor, not really an author. The relation to Judaism is a complex problem, with opinions ranging from a positing a Jewish author to denying any contact with Judaism. Needless to say, there is no concensus on the purpose of the writing—if there is one.

I started this work in the hopes of tackling the purpose of the epistle. But soon I discovered that there were a host of problems which would need to be addressed first: It might be possible, if unideal, to make reconstructions of the purpose and occasion independent of the uncertain timing and provenance. Perhaps even the literary form can be disregarded. But no discussion of purpose is possible without first judging the question of the unity or disunity of the text.

I also soon found out that the introductory questions had rarely been treated in depth. This is in fact natural: Most often these questions are addressed in introductory works on the Apostolic Fathers or early Christian literature in general, where not too many pages can be spent on any single question, and the authors are rarely Barnabas specialists. Though journal articles specializing on the questions of date and provenance aren't unheard of, most often they focus on some detail in the text, or else try to present a full reconstruction, with little room for details. Even some monographs reduce these questions to the footnotes.

Of course there are other monographs which take these questions seriously, especially those of Carleton Paget, Hvalvik and Prostmeier.[1] To these I stand in great debt. But I believe there is still room for some more discussion, and I hope to contribute to it with this work. I will address the questions of unity, form, date and

[1] Carleton Paget 1994; Hvalvik 1996; Prostmeier 1999.

provenance.

In section 2 I will first review the textual witnesses. These are not under dispute, but they are needed later on, and there has been one relevant publication after the in-depth treatment of Prostmeier. Then I will address the questions of unity and textual form. In section 3 I will go through the different hypotheses for the date and address their strengths and weaknesses. In section 4 I will tackle the question of provenance, with a special focus on reception, which I believe has a crucial role for the possibility of reaching a robust conclusion. At some points along the way I also hope to gather in one place references to parallel texts and other basic information, which is often hard to find in succint form.

In a way, this whole work is prolegomena, just an introduction. But as such, I hope it will offer a framework within which it is easier to evaluate the more complicated questions of purpose and relationship to Judaism.

2 The Text

2.1 Manuscripts and Editions

The text of the Epistle of Barnabas has been preserved in its entirety, if only in few manuscripts and some serious textual problems.[2]

The complete text is found in two manuscripts: The first is Codex Sinaiticus (**S**), the famous 4th century uncial containing the whole Bible, which Costantin von Tischendorf acquired from the monastery of Saint Catherine and published in 1862.[3] There the epistle is found near the end of the codex, between Revelation and Shepherd of Hermas. In the context of Apostolic Fathers Codex Sinaiticus has traditionally been notated as **S**, even though the same manuscript is **ℵ** in New Testament textual criticism. The second manuscript to contain the epistle is Codex Hierosolymitanus (**H**), an important codex dated AD 1056—by the scribe—containing the text of Pseudo-Chrysostom's Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae, the Epistle of Barnabas, 1–2 Clement and the long recension of the letters of Ignatius.[4] Philotheos Bryennios discovered the manuscipt in 1875. Codex Hierosolymitanus is marked alternatively as **H**, **C** (= Constantinopolitanus) or **C**/**H**.

Before these codices were found, the text of the epistle had to be assembled from incomplete witnesses, partially Greek, partially Latin. The text of Barn. 5:7– is preserved by a group of 16 closely related medieval manuscripts (**G**),[5] the oldest of which is Codex Vaticanus graecus 859 (**V**),[6] for which different sources give dates from 11th to 15th century. This group curiously conflates Polycarp's *To the Philippians* 1:1–9:2 with Barn. 5:7–. In the manuscripts there is no indication of the seam, and so the composite goes under the name of Polycarp. The text breaks in the middle of the verse, and sentence:

> [So, I exhort all of you to submit to the word of righteousness] – – convinced that [Ignatius, – – and Paul and the other apostles] didn't run in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are now in the place they deserve: with the Lord, with whom they also suffered. For they didn't love the present age, but him who died for us and because of us (οὐ γὰρ τὸν νῦν ἠγάπησαν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀποθανόντα καὶ δι′ ἡμᾶς ὑπὸ) (Pol. *Phil*. 9:2)
> by preparing the new people would show (τὸν λαὸν τὸν κενὸν [= καινὸν] ἑτοιμάζων ἐπιδείξῃ), while on earth, that once he's brought about resurrection, he'll execute judgement. (Barn. 5:7)[7]

[2]Lately Barn. 4:6 has gotten most attention due to its implications on the purpose of the epistle. See Rhodes 2004b; Edwards 2019, 10 n. 25.

[3]Tischendorf 1862, is the first (facsimile) edition. Today new high quality images are available online, see Codex Sinaiticus Project 2009, from quire 91 folio 2r to quire 92 folio 2v (334r–340v).

[4]Low quality monochrome images are online, Library of Congress s.a., 37r–51v (images 41–54).

[5]Prigent & Kraft 1971, 67–68, give 8; Prostmeier 1999, 18–31, describes 10; to which Myllykoski 2020, adds an additional 6.

[6]Decent quality monochrome images are available online, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana s.a., 198r–211v (photos 202–216).

[7]Text from Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana s.a., 198r (photo 202) column a, lines 13–18 (5–21),

Table 1: Manuscripts and their abbreviations.

	Manuscript	Content	Date
S	Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ)	1:1–21:9	IV
H	Codex Hierosolymitanus	1:1–21:9	1056
V	Codex Vaticanus graecus 859	5:7–21:9	XI–XV
G	Group of 16 related mss. including **V**	5:7–21:9	XI–XVI
P	Papyrus Florent. Laurentiana, PSI 757	9:1–6	III–V
L	(Latin) Codex Corbeiensis Q. v. I. 38/39 (Leningrad)	1:1–17:2	IX

Such transition obscures the syntax of both partial sentences, but **V** mends this by adding a full stop before καὶ: "For they didn't love the present age, but him who died for us. And by preparing the new people for our sake, he would show – –".[8] In light of this very unique mistake, the manuscript family must originate from a single defective ancestor, perhaps one with a lost quire.

The part missing (Barn. 1:1–5:7) from these manuscripts could in turn be found from a Latin translation (**L**) of chapters 1–17, preserved in a single 9th century manuscript, Codex Corbeiensis Q. v. I. 38/39 (Leningrad).[9] Using the text of **L** and a manuscript of group **G**, archbishop James Ussher prepared the first printed edition of the epistle in 1642. Unfortunately this edition was destroyed in a fire, along with the manuscript of group **G** used. Only parts of Ussher's edition survive.[10] Another edition was made by Nicolas-Hugues Ménard (= Hugo Menardus), the discoverer of **L**, and published posthumously in 1645.[11] Both of these editions also utilized the one additional witness known at the time: quotations by Clement of Alexandria (e.g. *Strom*. 2:6 for Barn. 1:5).[12]

After the important manuscript discoveries of the 19th century relatively little has been added: More manuscripts of group **G** have been found, but they add little. Outside of group **G** the only new Greek witness is Papyrus PSI 757 (**P**), a two-sided 3rd to 5th century fragment which contains Barn. 9:1–6 (with lacunae).[13] Codex

translation my own.

[8]See Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana s.a., 198r (photo 202) a 16; translation my own.

[9]For the text, see Heer 1908, 2–16. For discussion on the dating of the translation, see section 4.4.3.

[10]Most importantly the incomplete version later discovered and republished by Backhouse 1883.

[11]Ménard 1645.

[12]Ussher in Backhouse 1883, 250; Ménard 1645, 2–3. For the rest, see footnote 208. For the history of these editions and more details of the manuscripts used, see Backhouse 1883, vii–xx; and Cunningham 1877, iii–iv.

[13]It was already published by Vitelli 1925, 40–43; and as a facsimile in Naldini 1964, plate XVIII (unfortunately beyond my reach), but it was unknown to Barnabas research until noticed by Joost Smit Sibinga and subsequently republished by R. A. Kraft 1967; Today it's available online at Papiri della Società Italiana s.a.

Cantabrigiensis Univ. Add. 2023 (sy), a 13th century Syriac miscellany, provides excerpts from Barn. 19:1–2, 8, 20:1.[14] There are several parallel texts with parts of the Epistle of Barnabas, especially for the Two Ways section.[15] While they are sometimes employed in textual criticism, their value is negligible. The same is most often true about sources quoting the epistle, since the text is rarely quoted verbatim.[16]

The latest textual find related to the epistle is Papyrus Berolinensis 20915, which often goes by the name Das Berliner koptische Buch. It consists of very fragmentary remains of a 4th century papyrus codex written in Sahidic.[17] The text quotes the Epistle of Barnabas several times by name, though it's limited to just a few verses (Barn. 6:11–12, 17–18).[18] The Sahidic is probably a translation of a 2nd century Greek text, and so would be an extremely early witness. Moreover, the text uses verbatim quotes extensively, and is relatively careful witness, though of course being a translation limits the usefullness.[19] It contains at least one plausible variant: close to **G**, it reads "And when he saw that the creation *of man* was good – –" (ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱ[ⲙⲉ] = ἀνθρώπου; cf. ἄνθρωπον **G**) versus the usually favored reading "*our* creation" (ἡμῶν **SHL**).[20]

Prigent & Kraft have made the most detailed critical edition of the epistle for Sources Chrétiennes.[21] It includes a French translation. Holmes' latest edition of Apostolic Fathers has an English translation and an eclectic text with "selected – – important" variants in a format similar to the modern Greek New Testaments.[22] The new Fontes Christiani Greek-German edition of Prostmeier is also excellent.[23] Unless otherwise noted, I will use Holmes' edition for both texts and translations whenever citing Barnabas or other Apostolic Fathers. For reference, table 1 lists the manuscripts referred to in this work.[24]

[14]For the text, see Wright 1901, 611–612; Baumstark 1912, 237, gives a german translation. For discussion, see Prostmeier 1999, 32–34.

[15]See section 2.2 below.

[16]See section 4.4 below.

[17]Published by Schenke Robinson 2004a; 2004c.

[18]For the text and parallel Greek, see Schenke 1999, 58–63, 67–69. The published edition Schenke Robinson 2004a, 282–289, 298–301, includes some additional fragments for the pages.

[19]For other quotes and discussion, see Hoek 2003.

[20]143 = B-6→, see Schenke 1999, 58, 68, 71–72.

[21]Prigent & Kraft 1971.

[22]Holmes 2007, xxiv, 380–441. Cf. Novum Testamentum Graece 2012.

[23]Prostmeier 2018, unfortunately not available in Finnish libraries at the time of writing.

[24]For more detail about textual criticism and manuscripts, see R. A. Kraft 1961, 25–42; Prigent & Kraft 1971, 49–70; Holmes 2007, 375–376; Pearse s.a.; and especially the very thorough survey of Prostmeier 1999, 11–74.

2.2 The Two Ways and Redaction Criticism

The discovery of Codex Hierosolymitanus (**H**) by Philotheos Bryennios in 1873 had a great impact on the study of Apostolic Fathers: For the first time the complete Greek text of First Clement was available (including 57:5–63:4, which Codex Alexandrinus lacks). Didache, a document previously known only from references by church fathers, was suddenly available in its entirety. In Didache's wake came also renewed interest in the Epistle of Barnabas because of the similarity between Barn. 18–20 and Did. 1:1–6:1, a section known as the Two Ways. The question rose: is the Epistle of Barnabas dependent on Didache, Didache dependent on Barnabas or perhaps both dependent on a common source? All the options have had their proponents.

The Two Ways isn't limited to Barnabas and Didache though. Many of the other texts containing it have a close relation to Didache: Doctrina Apostolorum,[25] Apostolic Constitutions 7:1–19,[26] Apostolic Church Order 4–14[27] and the Arabic version of Life of Shenouda, the hagiography of a 5th century Coptic abbot.[28] But the Two Ways motif can also be found in other forms in other texts: Herm. 35–38, 2 En. 30:15,[29] Testament of Asher 1–6,[30] Qumran Rule of the Community (1QS 3:13–4:26)[31] and already in the Old Testament in Deut 11:26–, Ps 1 and Jer 21:8–10. In light of all this material, especially 1QS, today the majority view is that there is a (loosely defined) common source (so-called Greek Two Ways) behind the Two Ways sections in Barnabas and Didache.[32]

Once, however, English speaking research strongly favored the view that Barnabas was the originator of the Two Ways material.[33] Since in Didache the Two Ways

[25]Essentially Did. 1:1–3a, 2:2–6:1 in Latin, see Rordorf & Tuilier 1978, 203–210, for a critical edition.

[26]Also known as Constitutiones apostolorum and Constitutiones apostolicae. 7:20– follows Did. 6:3–. For the text in Greek and Latin, see Funk 1905a, 386–405; and for an English translation of the relevant part, see Schaff 1886, 260–274.

[27]Also known as Apostolic Church Ordinance(s), Ecclesiastical Canons and Constitutio Ecclesiastica Apostolorum. For the relevant part in Greek and English, see Schaff 1886, 238–247.

[28]Other forms of the name include Shenoute and Sinuthius. For an English translation of the Two Ways section, see Davis 1995, 365–367; though apparently it isn't translated from Arabic but from the French version of Amélineau 1888, 289–296. For a discussion, see Sandt & Flusser 2002, 66–70.

[29]For an English translation, see Andersen 1983, 152.

[30]In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. For an English translation, see Kee 1983, 816–818.

[31]For the text and translation, see Charlesworth et al. 1994, 14–17. The work is also called Community Rule, Manual of Discipline and Serek Hayaḥad. Besides 1QS, smaller fragments of the same text were also found in other Qumran scrolls.

[32]For discussion on the relationship between Barnabas and the other versions of the Two Ways, see the seminal work of Audet 1952, 220–225; see also Carleton Paget 1994, 80–82; Boddens Hosang 2018.

[33]The proponents of Barnabean priority included J. A. Robinson 1920, 69–70(–); and Muilenburg 1929, 69–83, 165–168. For history of research and further references, see e.g. Jefford 1989, 11–17;

is in less eschatological and more orderly form, it would be logical to see it as a later stage of development. But more importantly, while Didache just relates the material and then moves on to other themes,[34] the language of Two Ways permeates the whole Epistle of Barnabas:

Thus already in the beginning (Barn. 1:4) the author claims: "I know that the Lord traveled with me in the way of righteousness." In Barn. 5:4 we read that "– – people deserve to perish if, having knowledge of the way of righteousness, they ensnare themselves in the way of darkness." Later he quotes the way motif from Ps 1 twice, Ps 1:1 in Barn. 10:10 ("path of sinners" = "ὁδ[ὸς] ἁμαρτωλῶν") and Ps 1:3–6 in Barn. 11:6–7: "– – [T]he Lord knows the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish" ("ὁδ[ὸς] δικαίων – – ὁδὸς ἀσεβῶν").

Other two ways terminology such as "light" (φῶς: Barn. 3:4 (= Isa 58:8), 14:7 (= Isa 42:6), 8 (= Isa 49:6)), "death" (θάνατος: Barn. 5:6, 11, 7:3 (≈ Lev 23:29, but LXX lacks θάνατος), 10:5, 11:2 (≈ Jer 2:13, but LXX lacks θάνατος), 12:2, 5, 14:5, 16:9), error (or going astray; πλάνη: Barn. 2:10, 4:1, 12:10, 14:5) and their cognates abound in the first part of the epistle (1–17).[35] While many of these are found in quotations from the Old Testament, this shouldn't lessen their weight: in addition to the obvious point that the author has chosen what to reproduce, it's significant that in some cases the key terms aren't found in LXX itself but are alterations to the text, probably originating with the author of the epistle. Although a common Greek Two Ways source is almost universally accepted today, Barnabean priority still exists in a modified way: The epistle is often reconstructed to be closer to the original document than other versions of Two Ways.[36]

Notwithstanding, the somewhat unsystematic nature of the epistle and the existence of the shorter Latin version (**L**) have sometimes lead to the conclusion that the Epistle of Barnabas is not a unified whole, but a result of several editors with differing goals. Most of these theories were put forward in the 19th century, but the latest is as late as 1971.[37] Theories of interpolation have some upsides: They try to make sense of the multifarious and sometimes incongruent material in the text. With such a theory it would also be more intelligible how the epistle came to be circulated under the name of the apostolic Barnabas—the original version was written

or Rhodes 2011, 797–800.

[34] R. A. Kraft 1965, 6–7.

[35] For more, see Hvalvik 1996, 63–65; Rhodes 2011, 804.

[36] See e.g. the stemmatological tree in Kloppenborg 2005, 196.

[37] Schenkel 1837; Heydecke 1875; Völter 1888; 1904; Robillard 1971.

by him![38]

Unfortunately positing interpolation causes more problems than it solves. It's very hard to find an objective way to differentiate between layers, and all the versions of these theories have met with charges of arbitrary divisions. They make it hard to explain the unity of language and style, which spans the whole. In addition to the Two Ways vocabulary, other recurring themes are God's commandments[39] or righteousness and sin in general,[40] covenant,[41] the triad faith, hope and love,[42] and especially "wisdom, understanding, insight and knowledge" (Barn. 2:1–3, 21:5–6),[43] which form an *inclusio* framing the whole work.[44] The author overuses a host of rethorical devices including rhetorical questions,[45] transition words,[46] demonstratives,[47] negation[48] and alpha privative,[49] imperative[50] and hortatory subjunctive[51] as well as intensifiers.[52] Characteristic of the author are also his incoherent style, abrupt transitions[53] and personal asides.[54]

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[38]So e.g. Völter 1888, 107–109.

[39]ἐντολή 10×, δικαίωμα 8× (1 quote), δόγμα 5×.

[40]δικαιοσύνη 9× (2 quotes), δίκαιος 8× (4 q.), δικαίως 3×, δικαιόω 3× (1 q.), ἁμαρτία 2×1 (3 q.), ἁμαρτωλός 7× (3 q.) etc.

[41]διαθήκη 14×: Barn. 4:6, 7 (quote, but word not in LXX), 8, 6:19, 9:6, 9, 13:1, 6, 14:1, 2, 3, 5 (2×), 7.

[42]Five times together: Barn. 1:4, 6, 4:8, 11:8, 12:7. Barn. 4:8 is technically a quotation from Moses, but the words aren't from Num 21:9.

[43] Elsewhere outside of quotations: σοφία (6:10, 16:9), σοφός (6:10), σοφίζω (5:3, 9:4), σύνεσις (10:1), συνίημι (4:6, 8, 6:5, 10:12 (2×), 12:10), ἀσύνετος (2:9, 5:3), ἐπίσταμαι (1:4), ἐπιστήμων (6:10), γνῶσις (1:5, 5:4, 6:9, 9:8, 10:10, 13:7, 18:1, 19:1), γνωρίζω (1:7, 5:3), ἀγνώς (2:3), γνώμη (2:9, 21:2), γινώσκω (12:3, 7:1, 16:2, 19:11, 20:2 (2×)).

[44]This *inclusio* has surpisingly gone undiscussed in recent research. E.g. Carleton Paget 1994; Hvalvik 1996; Edwards 2019 don't mention it. Rhodes 2004a, 89, 99 n. 39 seems to be aware of the similarity of these passages, but doesn't discuss it further. Other phrases to note are the *seeking out* (ἐκζητοῦντες) of *righteous requirements* (δικαιώματα) of *the Lord* (κυρίου) in Barn. 2:1, 21:5–6, and the goal of the writing to *cheer you up* εὐφρᾶναι in 1:8, 21:9. There is also a certain symmetry between the current evil days (2:1) and the future day of judgement (21:6). The mention of "patience" in both places may be accidental. Edwards 2019, 86 discusses the *inclusio* formed by the two Sinai accounts (4:6–8, 13–14).

[45]Most often to introduce either a quotation or an exegesis: Barn. 5:5, 6:1, 3 2×, 6, 8, 9, 10 2×, 17, 18, 7:4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 8:1, 4, 6, 9:5, 6, 8, 10:6, 7, 11 (3×), 12, 11:10, 12:3, 8, 13:5, 7, 16:9

[46]οὖν 58×, πέρας γέ τοι 6× (Barn. 5:8, 10:2, 12:6, 15:6, 8, 16:3), ἐτι δε καὶ 4× (4:6, 14, 5:5, 16:1) etc.

[47]τοῦτο 35×, ταῦτα 14×, οὕτω(ς) 25× etc.

[48]οὐ/οὐκ/οὐχ 91×, μὴ 48×, οὔδε 17×, οὔτε 10×, etc.

[49]ἀνομία 9× (1 quote), ἀσεβής 6× (1 q.), ἀκεραιοσύνη 2×, ἀπεριτμητος 2× (2 q.), ἄφθαρτος 2×, etc.

[50]μάθετε 8×, προσέχετε 6× etc.

[51]13 times outside of quotations: Barn. 4:1 (2×), 2, 9, 10 (2×), 11, 7:2, 11:1, 13:1, 14:1, 16:6, 18:1.

[52]τέλειος 4× (Barn. 1:5, 4:11, 8:1, 13:7, 2 other uses), τελείως 3× (4:1, 10, 10:10), εἰς τέλος 3× (4:6, 10:5, 19:11), ὑπερ 4× (1:4, 4:6, 5:9, 19:5, 1 other use), ὑπερ- 4× (1:2 (2×), 5:3, 8), μᾶλλον 3× (1:3, 19:8, 21:9), κατὰ πάντα 2× (7:1, 19:3), πάντα (πᾶς) 17× outside of quotations (2:4, 3:6, 4:1, 6, 5:5, 7:1, 9:5, 6, 12:2, 5, 7, 8, 15:7, 8, 19:9, 21:3, 5) etc.

[53]E.g. Barn. 11:1, Barn. 16:1.

[54]Asides: Barn. 1:5, 8, 4:6, 9, 6:5, 9:9, 17:1–2. The examples in this paragraph are mostly from Muilenburg 1929, 55, 62–69; though I made some expansions and corrections (foremost to alpha privative, hortatory subjunctive, intensifiers) with the help of Goodspeed 1907; H. Kraft 1963; and Wallace et al. 2013, 127–145. For more examples see Muilenburg 1929, 48–72; Carleton Paget 1994,

The existence of the shorter Latin version has sometimes been seen as proof of an edition of the epistle without the Two Ways. Goodspeed writes:

> No one can miss the sharp cleavage at the end of chapter 17. The idle if ingenious fancies of the allegorical interpreter give place to the stern, blunt commandments of the Christian lawgiver, with only the crudest of transitions between. It is evident that two short Christian tracts have been put together. And this impression becomes a conviction when we find that each part has been found by itself in a Latin version. The Latin translation of Barnabas extends only through chapter 17, which is properly finished off with a doxology. The remaining portion has also been found in a Latin version – –, which is entitled The Teaching of the Apostles (De doctrina Apostolorum) and contains almost every line of Barnabas chapters 18–20 but arranged in quite another order.

As tantalizing as the existence of these two Latin texts is, this "conviction" is based on false premises. The similarities between the two parts of the epistle have already been discussed. In addition the Latin version shows obvious signs of being secondary: The doxology Goodspeed mentions is itself an indication of later editing, as it is largely transferred from an earlier verse:

> *Once again you have the glory of* Christ, how *all things* were made *in him and* through *him*; to whom be honor, power and glory, now, forever and ever. (*Habes interim de maiestate* Christi quomodo *omnia in illum et per illum* facta sunt: cui sit honor, virtus, gloria nunc et in saecula saeculorum.) (Barn. 17:2 **L**)[55]
>
> *Once again you have* in these things *the glory of* Jesus, because *all things* are *in him and* for *him*. (*ἔχεις πάλιν καὶ ἐν τούτοις τὴν δόξαν τοῦ* Ἰησοῦ, *ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα καὶ εἰς αὐτόν*.) (Barn. 12:7; **L** omits)

That the doxology is borrowed from earlier means it cannot be original. Instead it must have been added to its current location when the Two Ways was removed, probably by the translator-editor of the Latin version. Thus the Latin version, contra Goodspeed, actually provides indirect evidence for the originality of the Two Ways section.

It should be noted that **L** also preserves the author's abrupt transition to the Two Ways in Barn. 17:2: "So much, then, for these things." (ταῦτα μὲν οὕτως ≈ haec autem sic sunt)—only to replace it with the doxology.[56] The Latin shows other obvious signs of editing too: it regularly removes the author's asides (e.g. Barn. 1:3b, 4:9a, 6:5), sometimes corrects references (4:3 "Enoch" → "Daniel", 11:4 "the prophet" → "Isaiah", 11:6 "another prophet" → "David"), and generally smoothes out the Greek.[57] According to Heer the Latin version even corrects biblical passages to conform to the LXX/ Old Latin.[58] This brings us to yet another objection: it's hard

76; Hvalvik 1996, 57–65; Rhodes 2011, 802–809.

[55]Translation my own, latin from Heer 1908, 16, 80.

[56]So Muilenburg 1929, 70.

[57]For more examples, see Muilenburg 1929, 15–16, 62–63; Rhodes 2011, 801; Edwards 2017, 60.

[58]Heer 1908, XXIII; 1909, 221–235.

to fathom how this extensively edited text, which interpolatory hypotheses posit, wouldn't be more polished, like the Latin is.

Finally, of the early witnesses to the epistle, Clement of Alexandria doesn't quote the Two Ways, but Origen does (*Princ.* 3:2:4):

> The same is declared by Barnabas in his Epistle, where he says there are two ways, one of light and one of darkness, over which he asserts that certain angels are placed,—the angels of God over the way of light, the angels of Satan over the way of darkness. (= Barn. 18:1)[59]

The evidence for the originality of the Two Ways section is overwhelming. Even Robillard, who posits a three stage interpolation theory, locates the Two Ways to the oldest stratum.[60] Also otherwise the material reviewed above makes it hard to sustain theories of several editors.[61] Accordingly, today interpolation hypotheses have fallen out of favor.[62] Whatever view one takes on the text's coherence,[63] it's best to accept the epistle as a unity.

Moreover, there are simpler ways than interpolation to explain the variation in the epistle, particularly the fact that the author has used sources. Starting with Windisch, there have been several source critical studies of the epistle.[64] Yet source criticism has sometimes reduced the role of the author to a mere collector of sources in a way I find unrealistic. As an example, R. A. Kraft writes about the authors of the Epistle of Barnabas and Didache:

[59] Translation is from Crombie 1869, 231.

[60] Robillard 1971, 206.

[61] There is one more fundamental reason to apply theories of interpolation only with caution, and it has to do with epistemology and probability: In history we deal with probabilities all the time. Even if probabilities are described with words such as "far-fetched", "plausible" or "likely" instead of numbers, they are still subject to the same mathematical laws. Bayes' theorem can be expressed in the form *probability of a hypothesis given the evidence* is proportional to the product of *the probability of the evidence given the hypothesis* and *the probability of (the assumptions of) the hypothesis.* (In more techincal terms: *probability a posteriori* is proportional to the product of *likelihood* and *probability a priori*, or $\mathrm{p}(h|e) \propto \mathrm{p}(e|h)\mathrm{p}(h)$.)

Probability of the evidence given the hypothesis means how well the hypothesis explains the evidence. From that perspective, interpolatory theories might have some merits. But whenever a theory needs to postulate prior editions and redactors for which no direct evidence is available, the probability of all its assumptions being true gets necessarily lower. Thus even to reach the same level of plausibility it would have to explain the evidence significantly better than the alternatives, which make no such assumptions.

While the use of Bayesian epistemology and methods have proliferated in recent decades in many areas of academic study, unfortunately they have yet to break through in history. For more about Bayesian epistemology, see e.g. Talbott 2016.

[62] There are a couple of exceptions. Much like Goodspeed 1942, 31–33; earlier, Jefford 2012, 4, believes that "some unknown editor most likely fashioned the current structure by combining two separate literary sources" and adding the epistolary framing, though he also comments that the editor might have been "perhaps even the author on a separate occasion"; Rothschild 2018, 434; 2019, 225 n. 8, apparently follows Jefford. Neither posits a detailed hypothesis, though. For a more thorough review of interpolatory theories and more criticism, see Carleton Paget 1994, 72–78; see also Hvalvik 1996, 208–209.

[63] See Hvalvik 1996, 207–211, for a concise discussion.

[64] E.g. Windisch 1920; Prigent 1961; R. A. Kraft 1961; Wengst 1984, 118–129.

> Some individual, it is true, has put them into the form(s) preserved for us. But that person is at best an "author-editor," who reproduces and reworks older materials. – – What the author-editor has received, he transmits. – – The transmitter has not consistently digested the materials so that they become second nature; the transmitter has not integrated them by means of a perspective that may be considered characteristic of that person. Rather, the tradition speaks through the tradent. It is of prime importance. The transmitter is its vehicle, but the focus remains on the traditional material, not on the author-editor.[65]

Against this evaluation it should be noted that the same linguistic evidence that complicates interpolatory theories also indicates that the author didn't reproduce his sources unedited. Carleton Paget has written an extensive analysis and critique of the source critical approach to the epistle.[66] Following him, I shall for the purposes of this work take the use of sources for granted, but consider the author an active utilizer of his sources, who adapts them for his own purposes.[67]

2.3 Form

That the Epistle of Barnabas is really an epistle, i.e. letter (ἐπιστολή), was in general taken for granted by the ancient writers mentioning it: Origen (*Princ.* 3:2:4), Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3:25:4), Didymus the Blind (*Comm. Zach.* 259:21–24), Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 6), the writing About Father and Son (Sacramentary 31:2) and all the manuscripts call it a letter.[68] It is interesting, though, that the exceptions to this rule are the two earliest witnesses, Papyrus Berolinensis 20915 and Clement of Alexandria.[69]

Unfortunately the fragmentary nature of Papyrus Berolinensis 20915 precludes any firm conclusions for its part. It cites the epistle several times, and the first citation preserved probably isn't the first originally. The part where the author first introduced the epistle is missing, and that is where the other witnesses use the word *letter* (ἐπιστολή). With the writings of Clement there is no such problem. His commentary on the epistle hasn't survived (cf. Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 6:14:1), but in his extant writings he never refers to the epistle as a letter, and instead introduces it with phrases like "the Apostle Barnabas says" (ὁ ἀπόστολος Βαρνάβας – – φησὶν *Strom*. 2:6).[70] Using verbs of speaking isn't essential, as it's the style Clement most often uses for citations, also for example with Isaiah (φησίν) and Paul (λέγει, ἔφη) earlier in the same chapter.[71] He rarely uses the phrase "it is written" (γέγραπται), and even then seems to use it without differetiating between the Old Testament and

[65] R. A. Kraft 1965, 1–2.
[66] Carleton Paget 1994, 71–185.
[67] Carleton Paget 1994, 183–185.
[68] Nautrally **G** doesn't recognize it as a letter of *Barnabas*, see section 2.1 above.
[69] For more detail on the texts quoting the epistle, see section 4.4.
[70] Greek from Migne 1857a, 965.
[71] Migne 1857a, 960, 964–965.

other writings, such as Gospel to the Hebrews (*Strom*. 2:9).[72] But there's no mention of literary form.[73]

In contrast to the early church, in research it has been customary to give the epistle labels other than letter: Sometimes it's been called a sermon or a homily,[74] but most common has been to define it as a theological treatise of some kind, though the exact designations used to describe this fact are a plethora: cathecetical manual,[75] diatribe,[76] pamphlet,[77] propaganda,[78] tract,[79] treatise[80] and others. Often this evaluation comes with the verdict that the epistle is a theoretical excercise, aimed at no particular historical circumstances or audience.

It's true that the early church has given the label letter (or epistle) to some writings which show absolutely no signs of the literary form (e.g. 1 John, 2 Clement). This is not the case with the Epistle of Barnabas. It gives the appearance of being a letter, but this "epistolary framing" is deemed inauthentic. Sometimes the epistle is called a pseudepigraph, or Pseudo-Barnabas, even though it is anonymous. As another option some, for example Vielhauer, suggest that the author isn't really trying to pass his writing as a letter:

> Barnabas is not a real letter. Its author doesn't even seriosly try to create a fiction of a letter, but settles with a very poor epistolary framing for his writing: He drops *superscriptio* and *adscriptio* – –, giving only a *salutatio* which differs from the rest of early Christian letters, and the ending (21:7–9) doesn't give an epistolary impression either. – – Everything tangible about [the sender's and the addressees'] situation is missing, there's no correspondence, and the author doesn't bother to fabricate it. Rather, he writes a treatise without an occasion, without being restricted to a particular audience.[81]

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[72] Migne 1857a, 931.

[73] Prigent in Prigent & Kraft 1971, 9, tells that Clement counted it among catholic epistles, but I'm puzzled what passage this might refer to. Perhaps the reference is to Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 6:14:1)?

[74] Pfleiderer 1887, 661, "Briefform gefassten Homilie"; Barnard 1961, 22, "a homily to be read at the Paschal Vigil", but he believes that it was also a letter, sent to be read to the congregation (9); Wills 1984, 292, "sermon", more precisely "a word of exhortation", though he resorts to significant reshaping to fit the text to the mold.

[75] Daniélou 1958, 43: "un manuel catéchétique".

[76] Wrede 1906, 95, "eine Diatribe".

[77] Lietzmann 1932–1944, I 229 [231], "ein[] Flugschrift".

[78] Wengst 1971, 104; 1984, 113, "ein in Briefform gekleidetes Propagandaschreiben".

[79] Windisch 1920, 411, "ein Traktat"; Prostmeier 1999, 89.

[80] Vielhauer 1978, 602, "eine Abhandlung"; Räisänen 1987, 220, "an 'academic' treatise"; Koester 2000, 281, "treatise of scriptural gnosis".

[81] Vielhauer 1978, 601–602, "Der Barn ist kein wirklicher Brief. Sein Verfasser versucht nicht einmal ernsthaft, die Fiktion eines Briefes zu schaffen, sondern begnügt sich mit einer recht dürftigen brieflichen Rahmung seines Schreibens: er läßt im Präskript die Superscriptio und Adscriptio, also die Nennung seiner selbst als Absender und die der Adressaten weg und bringt nur eine Salutatio, die von der sonst in urchristlichen Briefen üblichen abweicht, und gibt auch dem Schluß (21, 7-9) kein briefliches Gepräge. – – Aber sonst fehlt jeder konkrete Hinweis auf seine oder ihre Situation, auf die Beziehungen zwischen Schreiber und Lesern; es fehlt die "Korrespondenz"; und der Verfasser bemüht sich auch nicht, sie zu fingieren. Er schreibt vielmehr eine Abhandlung ohne aktuellen Anlaß und ohne Begrenzung auf ein bestimmtes Publikum." Similarly Windisch 1920, 411; Wengst 1984, 111–112.

This solution is surely more coherent than an anonymous pseudepigraph. But it comes with its own problems: Is there evidence for this kind of "epistolary framing" apart from pseudepigraphs, or would the epistle be sui generis? And more generally: what defines a letter?

As for parallels among other Christian texts, I didn't manage to find any (though naturally that is no proof of their nonexistence). There are writings with "letter" in their name, but with no hint of the form in the text (1 John, 2 Clement, Pseudo-Titus). Writings with visible epistolary features seem to always include names (Letter to Rheginus (= Treatise on Resurrection), Mara Bar-Serapion). The only anonymous letter I found is the text About Father and Son (Sacramentary 31).[82] Since it is the closest comparison, it's instructive to look at it in more detail:

> Love and godly brotherhood—not only godly love but also humanly brotherhood—compelled us to write to you,[83] so that you might know the things pertaining to our life (whatever we've understood and learned from the holy teachers of the catholic and apostolic church of God), which the faith of Lord Christ Jesus provides. Consequently let us also dare—as we claim we undestand a little—to explain to you about our salvation, I mean, about the faith of the holy, catholic and apostlic church. (Sacramentary 31:1)
>
> – –
>
> So that I wouldn't much lengthen the discourse, these I thought to say in keeping with our smallness. – – [doxology] (Sacramentary 31:5)[84]

There are epistolary features, but they are nominal. The opening is quite long, yet includes no greeting. The role of closing is taken by one sentence mentioning the shortness of the writing, followed by a doxology. In between there's a completely independent doctrinal section. Nowhere there is any suggestion of a personal connection, and the references to the author and the recipient are limited to personal pronouns.

The Epistle of Barnabas doesn't seem comparable: It has an extended opening with professions of love and deferent commendation of the recipients, as well as recurring personal remarks later:

> **1**Greetings, sons and daughters, in the name of the Lord who has loved us, in peace. **2**Seeing that God's righteous acts toward you are so great and rich, I rejoice with an unbounded and overflowing joy over your blessed and glorious spirits; so deeply implanted is the grace of the

[82]For discussion of its provenance and authorship, see section 4.4.2.

[83]Singular "you", also later.

[84]Translation my own, Greek from Wobbermin 1898, 21, 24–25, Ἐπεὶ ἡ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ κατὰ θεὸν ἀδελφότης, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἡ κατὰ θεὸν ἀγάπη ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον ἀδελφότης ἤπειξεν ἡμᾶς τοῦ γράψαι σοι, ἵν' εἰδέναι ἔχοις τὰ περὶ τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν εἴτε μεμαθήκαμεν εἴτε ἐγνώκαμεν παρὰ τῶν ἱερῶν διδασκάλων τῆς καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιχορηγοῦντος διὰ τῆς ἐλπίδος ἡμῶν τοῦ κυρίου χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ. τολμήσωμεν καὶ μικρὰ μέτρα ὁμολογοῦντες ἔχειν δηλῶσαι σοι περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν, λέγω δὴ τὴς πίστεως τῆς ἁγίας καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς ἐκκλησίας. (Sacramentary 31:1) ἵνα οὖν μὴ ἐπὶ πολὺ παρελκύσω τὸν λόγον, ταῦτα ἔδοξα λέγειν κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν μικρότητα· (Sacramentary 31:5).

spiritual gift that you have received! [3]Therefore I, who also am hoping to be saved, congratulate myself all the more because among you I truly see that the Spirit has been poured out upon you from the riches of the Lord's fountain. How overwhelmed I was, on your account, by the long-desired sight of you! [4]Being convinced of this, therefore, and conscious of the fact that I said many things in your midst, I know that the Lord traveled with me in the way of righteousness. Above all I too am compelled to do this: to love you more than my own soul, because great faith and love dwell in you, through the hope of his life. [5]Accordingly, since I have concluded that if I care enough about you to share something of what I have received, I will be rewarded for having ministered to such spirits, I have hastened to send you a brief note, so that along with your faith you might have perfect knowledge as well. (Barn. 1:1–5)

– – not as a teacher but as one of you – – (Barn. 1:8)

I – – who in a special way love[] all of you more than my own soul – – (Barn. 4:6)

I – – your devoted servant (Barn. 4:9)

– – brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί) – – (Barn. 2:10, 3:6, 4:14, 5:5, 6:10, 15)

– – children (τέκνα) – – (Barn. 7:1, 9:7, 15:4)

I made every effort to write as well as I could, in order to cheer you up. Farewell, children of love and peace. May the Lord of glory and all grace be with your spirit. (Barn. 21:9)

This seems extremely elaborate for one who "doesn't even seriosly try" and "doesn't bother" to make a believable fabrication. On the contrary, it seems the author is trying very hard: He praises the recipients, emphasizes the mutual connection and belittles himself, yet trying simultaneously to also assert his teaching authority. It's difficult to see how Vielhauer's description fits the actual text. It seems that other early Christian texts with comparable features are hard to find. Perhaps the Epistle of Barnabas truly is in a class of its own. But if that is the case, the implication is that the epistolary features of the text cannot be satisfactorily explained by claiming that the author was following "a literary convention".[85]

But what does define a letter? Vielhauer above seemed to be using two different criteria: formal features and personal details. The formal features he mentions are *superscriptio* (the name of the sender) *adscriptio* (the name of the receiver) and *salutatio* (greeting), which together form the *prescriptio* of the letter. The traditional Greek form of this can be found for example in Acts 23:26: "Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings!" (Κλαύδιος Λυσίας τῷ κρατίστῳ ἡγεμόνι Φήλικι χαίρειν.) After the *prescriptio* would follow a wishing of good health called *proem*, or sometimes *exordium* in analogy to the introduction of the classical rhetorics of speeches.[86] Paul has a thanksgiving in his letters at this point (e.g. 1 Cor 1:4–10). Then would follow the body of the letter, and in the end would be the closing. Its elements are more variable, but in addition to a farewell wish it often

[85]Contra Quasten 1950, 85; Wengst 1984, 112.

[86]For *exordium* see e.g. Cicero *De or.* 2:78–79. The full dispositio of classical rhetoric rarely fits letters and shouldn't be forced on them. The teachers of rhetorics themselves were concerned with speeches and showed rarely interest in letters. See Kočovska-Stevović 2018, 161; When letters were addressed, both similarities and dissimilarities to speeches were recognized. The earliest treatment comes from Demetrius's work *De Elocutione* (2nd century BC to AD 1st century), whose comments are reproduced and discussed by e.g. Klauck 2006, 184–188.

contained greetings. Especially if the letter was long, its body would have a structure of its own.[87]

It's clear that the epistle contains some of these elements and is missing others: It clearly has a greeting even if it doesn't follow the most common patterns.[88] It has a *proem* with many typical features, including expressions of joy.[89] There is a farewell in the end, but no greetings nor discussion of future plans. And as already discussed, *superscriptio* and *adscriptio* are missing, though this isn't an unknown phenomenon, and sometimes they were written on the outside of the scroll.[90]

In older research it used to be typical to define a letter through these structural and stylistic features. Moreover, a difference was made between an epistle and a real letter. In the words of Deissmann:

> What is a letter? A letter is something non-literary, a means of communication between persons who are separated from each other. Confidential and personal in its nature, it is intended only for the person or persons to whom it is addressed, and not at all for the public or any kind of publicity. – – There is no essential difference between a letter and an oral dialogue; – – An epistle is an artistic literary form, a species of literature, just like the dialogue, the oration, or the drama. It has nothing in common with the letter except its form; apart from that one might venture the paradox that the epistle is the opposite of a real letter.[91]

However, already for decades this way of defining a letter, based on formal and stylistic features, has been perceived as prescriptive, not descriptive of real letters. Already in antiquity it was recognized that there were numerous different reasons and styles for a letter. With this recognizion followed the proliferaton of categories, from Cicero's 3 and Demetrius's 4 to the 21 of Pseudo-Demetrius and 41 of Pseudo-Libanius.[92] The modern view is that a letter is not a literary form, but a form or a situation of communication. Doering has written a large study on the often neglected effect of Jewish letter writing to its early Christian counterpart. He says:

> [T]he "letter" is not a "genre" in the sense of *Gattung*, "literary form" or "text type", but a more basic phenomenon. In this, [the present study] *disagrees* with a widely held assumption in Biblical scholarship and beyond. There has been some significant discussion on this matter particularly within German text-linguistics that unfortunately has hardly been noticed by the exegetical guild. These text-linguists argue that because of the *multifunctionality* of the letter it cannot be regarded as a text type.[93]

[87] Hvalvik 1996, 71–78; Klauck 2006, 17–41; Sarri 2018, 114–121. One structural feature in many Pauline letters and interestingly also in the Epistle of Barnabas is the division to doctrinal and ethical parts.

[88] About the greeting, see Goodspeed 1915, 163–165; Hvalvik 1996, 74–75.

[89] Hvalvik 1996, 76–78.

[90] Goodspeed 1915, 164; Roller 1933, 442 n. 256; Hvalvik 1996, 72–74.

[91] Deissmann 1910, 218–220; cf. the criticisms of Doty 1969, 183–192; and Doering 2012, 20–25. I've intentionally use *letter* and *epistle* exchangeably.

[92] Kočovska-Stevović 2018, 162, 166–168.

[93] Doering 2012, 18–19, emphasis in the original.

For the purposes of this discussion, Doering considers the Epistle of Barnabas evidently a letter, or more precisely "an epistolary treatise":[94]

> [T]he Letter of Barnabas has been labelled a "treatise" by numerous scholars, most recently by F. Prostmeier. Generally, these scholars tend to pay insufficient attention to the epistolary features of Barn. – – Barn. is thoroughly permeated by epistolary discourse.[95]

Once accepted that the epistle's inclusion of a "treatise" doesn't provide evidence against it being a letter, this conclusion is hard to avoid. The epistle is a letter. But it should be noted, that Doering himself doesn't want to make a distinction "between fictitious and non-fictitious letters." They do not differ in the form they represent, and as it comes to studying the features of letters, "fictitious letters may tell us – – even more [than non-fictitious ones], because such letters may attempt to emulate the typical form."[96]

So the fundamental question still remains: Is the Epistle of Barnabas *genuinely* a letter, or in other words, was it sent?[97] This cannot be solved by examining the formal features only. Definitive is whether the "epistolary discourse" in the writing is credible as being fiction. In my view the evidence is clearly against a fiction. No close parallels were found, which is all the more damning if it's accepted that a fictitious letter would more probably follow conventions in detail. I myself also find it hard to accept that the lavish professions of love are completely artificial—a conclusion largely shared in recent research.[98] It's most probable that the epistle is a letter in the true sense of the word. To plausibly state otherwise would require a serious explanation for the epistolary features and affectionate language in the epistle, preferably with plausible parallels. Mere appeal to the ubiquity of the epistolary form is no justification.

[94] Doering 2012, 492.
[95] Doering 2012, 213.
[96] Doering 2012, 25.
[97] Cf. Doty 1969, 193.
[98] Carleton Paget 1994, 44; Hvalvik 1996, 48–49; Rhodes 2011, 804 n. 18; Edwards 2019, 1–2 n. 2.

3 Date

3.1 General Timeframe

The exact dating of the epistle is a very disputed, but fortunately the dispute is one of details. The general period of writing can be delimited securely: First, the epistle clearly is written after the destruction of Jerusalem AD 70, since it mentions it explicitly (Barn. 16:4–5)—and is actually the earliest Christian work to do so, as famously pointed out by J. A. T. Robinson.[99] Second, the latest possible date is in the end of the second century, since Clement of Alexandria quotes the epistle by name in his work *Stromata*, written then.[100] Even a much earlier date is generally accepted, since the epistle mentions some sort of a "rebuilding" of the Jewish temple and reveals no knowledge of the Bar Kokhba war (AD 132–135), or at least its outcome.[101] Many are content with this 65-year period.[102]

Some details in the epistle call for a more specific dating, though: Most notable is the "rebuilding" of the temple in chapter 16 (3–4), going on in the present tense and "now". In addition in chapter 4 there are references to "the deception of the present age" (4:1), "the last days" and "the age of lawlessness" (4:9), which are apparently at hand. In the middle there is a pair of intriguing quotations from Daniel (Barn. 4:4–5, Dan 7:7–8, 24), equipped with an exhoration: "You ought, therefore, to understand" (4:6).

These clues have been variously interpreted. I will start with the more exact reference, the temple (Barn. 16).

3.2 Chapter 16

Chapter 16 has most often been evaluated as the more useful for determining the date.[103] This is natural, as it contains the only reference to the time of writing which isn't immersed in apocalyptic language (16:3–4):

> Furthermore, again he says: "Behold, those who tore down this temple will build it them-

[99] J. A. T. Robinson 1976, 313.

[100] See footnote 208.

[101] AD 132–135 is the traditional dating. But see Eck 1999, 87–88, who dates the end of the war to 136. Rhodes 2004a, 86–87, is prepared to relax this restraint, and consider dates "just after the Bar Kochba revolt"; Hvalvik 1996, 22–23, without explicitly mentioning the possibility, also argues in a way that seems to me to allow post-war dating, provided that construction of a Hadrian temple is still ongoing.

[102] E.g. Holmes 1999, 272: "Within these limits it is not possible to be more precise"; in Holmes 2007, 373: "difficult". Some, obviously granting little significance to chapter 16, give a larger timeframe, e.g. 70–170 by Tugwell 1989, 23.

[103] See e.g. R. A. Kraft 1961, 269.

> selves."[104] This is happening now. For because they went to war, it was torn down by their enemies, and now the very servants of their enemies will rebuild[105] it. (Barn. 16:3–4)

There are two significant textual problems in these verses: First, "this is happening now" (γίνεται) is omitted by **SH** (present in **GL**). Second, **S** adds a second καὶ before αὐτοὶ, as the result of witch "they and the servants" are the rebuilders, Jews themselves are included.[106]

The first of these can be solved conclusively: after the times referred to in the text were long past, there was no building of the temple "happening now". It was easier for the scribe to just omit the γίνεται, even if the idea is still preserved in the νῦν of the next sentence. In addition, the word forms an asyndeton, so the text runs more smoothly without it.[107] Conversely, for the same reasons it is unlikely that the word would have been added.

The additional καὶ, though supported by only one witness (**S**), is harder to account for. Most translators and commentators omit it, but perhaps too hastily. Carleton Paget marshals impressive evidence for its originality: All the reasons that make the word seem peculiar in its context only make it the more difficult reading. And if adopted, it would form a parallel with the beginning of the verse: "– – αὐτοὺσ – – ἐχθρῶν, – – αὐτοὶ – – ἐχθρῶν", where the words would have the same referents.[108]18–19]carletonpaget:barnabas It is significant which reading is adopted here: the reading of **S** would identify the temple as Jewish, whereas the other reading leaves all possibilities open.[109] In my opinion the issue is best decided after coming to a conclusion about the epistle's purpose. The text-critical solution is too unsure to offer much support for any interpretation.

As already noted, the temple torn down is obviously the second Jewish temple, destroyed in AD 70. Against this Weizsäcker and—as an option—Williams have suggested that the reference is to the Solomonic First Jewish temple instead.[110] Williams

[104]The source is unknown. The quotation has some resemblance to Isa 47:15, but there is little verbal agreement. R. A. Kraft 1961, 270–271, has suggested that the real source is an unknown apocalyptic text on the same theme; cf. Prigent & Kraft 1971, 190. For the view that the author has himself modified the quote, see e.g. Carleton Paget 1994, 20–21.

[105]ἀνοικοδομήσουσιν. Carleton Paget 1994, notes that Isa 47:15 has only οἰκοδομήσουσιν, so the *re*building is most probably the author's own interpreation.

[106]See Prigent & Kraft 1971, 190; The second variant is unfortunately not mentioned Holmes 2007, 430.

[107]Carleton Paget 1994, 18, see there for the list of asyndeta in the epistle.

[108].

[109]Schäfer 1981, 34, commenting on the reading of **S**, claims that αὐτοὶ could refer to Romans ("[s]prachlicht zumindest möglicht scheint mir – –"), which in my view is far too unnatural. Carleton Paget 1994, 18, uses the variant of **S**, but Richardson & Shukster 1983, 35 n. 10, 36, who offer the same overall interpretation of this passage, ignore the variant.

[110]Weizsäcker 1863, 226; Williams 1933, 342–343

points out that γίνεται could be understood as a historic present. Grammatically that is true, but contextually the interpretation is impossible: There is no historic "now" νῦν. As for the temple being rebuilt, three interpretations have been suggested: a spiritual temple, a rebuilt Jewish temple, and a pagan temple. Apart from variation of details, these three must be the only possible options (non-concrete temple, concrete Jewish temple, concrete non-Jewish temple).

Until recently, it was common to see the rebuilding as spiritual, meaning the "building" of a Christian.[111] This view has some initial plausibility, since precisely this is the subject of the rest of the chapter (16:6–10). Prigent even thinks that the author's tendency to use spiritualizing interpretations is a sufficent reason to accept the spiritual temple here a priori![112] This interpretation has one great strength: it isn't hampered by the need to for any historical reconstructions of the rebuilding of the temple.

But the interpretation has serious problems, which render it very improbable: The immediate context, including the next verse (5), refers clearly to the concrete Jerusalem temple.[113] The point of Barn. 16:1–5 is the destruction of the earthly temple, and verse 6 begins a new section. The text and context just don't have room for the spiritual temple. In addition, "the very servants of their enemies" is a most curious self-description from the Christian author,[114] especially one who seems to suggest Satanic control of the Roman empire elsewhere (Barn. 2:1, 4:4–6a). Finally, the word "*re*building" seems even at the bare minimum to presuppose comparable degrees of legitimacy to the two temples, if not identity. And in the author's view the Jerusalem temple never was a true temple of God.[115]

"Rebuilding" would be most natural in the context of a new Jewish temple. A century ago some favored the idea that the Jews actually did rebuild the temple before Bar Kokhba revolt,[116] but in lack of evidence the view never gained much supporters.[117] Consequently propositions have shifted to a Jewish temple *hoped for*; a hope not yet realized, but a hope so vivid nonetheless, that a Christian author would express it as "happening now". "Rebuilding" is most naturally understood this way.

[111]Proponents include Wieseler 1870, 612–614; Lightfoot 1891, 241; Funk 1901, XXIII–XXIV; Bardenhewer 1902, 93; Williams 1933, 343; Prigent 1961, 75–83; Gunther 1976, 150–151; J. A. T. Robinson 1976, 314–315.

[112]Prigent in Prigent & Kraft 1971, 191.

[113]So also Hvalvik 1996, 19, and Wengst 1971, 107.

[114]Alon 1984, 450.

[115]Hvalvik 1996, 21, comes near to making the same observation. For more criticism, see Carleton Paget 1994, 19–20.

[116]Schlatter 1897, 66–67, followed by Haeuser 1912, 108.

[117]For a contemporary criticism, see Schürer 1901, 673, n. 69.

Such a hope would also explain neatly the tension between the present (γίνεται) and the future (ἀνοικοδομήσουσιν) tenses,[118] though on the other hand the sure promise of destruction in verse 5 remains somewhat of a problem.[119] There are also some promising rabbinic passages articulating just that kind of hope.[120]

Problems begin with identifying this historical situation. Since in the passage the builders are (at least) the "servants of [the] enemies", i.e. Romans, situations where there have been hopes of rebuilding without Roman approval are out of question.[121] Of course, more than mere approval is certainly required, and the situation should also have been widely known to end up being referred to here.

Since Volckmar, who began this line of argument,[122] many possible dates have been put forth, amongst others the reigns of Hadrian[123] and Vespasian.[124] Earlier these theories failed to convince many, but recently the suggestion of Richardson & Shukster, the short range of Nerva, has gathered respectable following.[125] They present a compelling convergence of evidence: the author's modifications to the Isaiah quotation (Isa 47:15 in Barn. 16:3–4), a plausible interpretaion of the kings in chapter 4,[126] numismatic and archaeological evidence for Nerva's reform of the Jewish tax, and rabbinic texts suggesting hopes of collecting again the temple tax, a right removed at the beginning of Trajan's reign. Almost any partsof this evidence could be contested, but Richardson & Shukster manage to build an attractive, coherent picture by interlocking the pieces.

Nevertheless, as an explanation of chapter 16 the suggestion must remain un-

[118] Contra Hvalvik 1996, 20, who gives more weight to γίνεται and νῦν, since they are the author's addition to the prophecy. Even though it's an argumentum ex silentio, I would like to question why the author then did not change the verb also to read ἀνοικοδομοῦσιν—he added the prefix, after all. Either the tension has been left intentionally, or the author has been very sloppy with his editing. Either way, not much can be based on it. However, after a fashion I do agree with Hvalvik's criticism of these theories; see below.

[119] See D. R. Schwartz 1992, 150; but Carleton Paget 1994, 25, proves this problem surmountable.

[120] In particular, see the story in Gen. Rab. 64:10. For more, less connected with the temple, see Richardson & Shukster 1983, 44–. The passages are difficult to date, and thus compatible with a wide variety of suggestions. They are also of uncertain historical value.

[121] E.g. plausibly during the Bar Kokhba revolt. But today many deny that the rebels ever controlled Jerusalem: Bowersock 1980, 136–137; Mildenberg 1980, 320–325; D. R. Schwartz 1992, 151. Smallwood 1976, 435 n. 28; (and somewhat similarly Richardson & Shukster 1983, 37) claims that the phrase could mean "the Jews as subjects of their enemy", but though the Greek could be translated this way, the prophecy wouldn't be fulfilled without Roman cooperation.

[122] So Hvalvik 1996, 19, see there for more references.

[123] Volckmar 1856, 355–361, and.

[124] Ewald 1859, 20–21, 137; Tugwell 1989, 40–41.

[125] Richardson & Shukster 1983, 41–. According to Carleton Paget 1994, 15, Hilgenfeld 1877, xxxvi–xxxvii, was the first to suggest Nerva (although he had earlier supported Domitian). The proposition is accepted by Carleton Paget 1994, 15–28; S. G. Wilson 1995, 135–136; Murray 2004, 44–47; Aitken 2005, 200–201.

[126] See below, section 3.3. Richardson & Shukster 1983, 32, are exceptional in that they giving both these key texts an equal weight, a fact they don't fail to point out.

sure; not only because of its speculative nature, but more importantly because it fails to deliver what is needed: Proof of a historical situation, when Roman participation in the rebuilding of the Jewish temple would be so probable, that the Christian author of the epistle would treat it as a fact. They present an admirable case that is quite possible, even plausible. But it's hardly probable.

The third option is a pagan temple, namely the temple of Jupiter built by Hadrian in Aelia Capitolina. Calling a pagan temple the Jewish temple rebuilt is of course strained. But this hardly amounts to a counterargument: if the author really meant this, the irony would have been obvious to the original readership, and it's well within the tone of the epistle.[127]

Originally propounded (but not accepted) by Volckmar,[128] this position has lately received significant proponents.[129] This is at least partly because it is an easy solution: whereas a spiritual temple is problematic on textual and contextual grounds, and a Jewish temple rebuilt on historical ones, it would seem that for this solution there are no such objections. The suggestion fits to the text, and a passage from a reliable source, Cassius Dio, provides the needed external confirmation (*Hist. rom.* 69:12:1–2):

> At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there.[130]

But is it such an easy solution? Though it seems to have escaped the notice of its proponents, the Hadrianic temple on the Temple Mount is not on very firm ground in recent research on the Bar Kokhba war.[131] Though it might still possibly be considered the majority view, the existence of the Hadrianic temple has lately received strong criticism, the most comprehensive of which is given by Eliav.[132]

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[127] Williams 1933, 342, complains that no Christian could do such an equation. But surely Christian have done worse things.

[128] Volckmar 1856, 354. He is the first according to Prostmeier 1999, 117; Carleton Paget 1994, 24, though, attributes the view to Lipsius 1869, 371–372, who was apparently the first to accept it.

[129] I.e., the monographs after Carleton Paget: Hvalvik 1996, 21–23; Prostmeier 1999, 117–119, 503–504; Rhodes 2004a, 78–87. Edwards 2019, 1 n. 2, doesn't take a position. For more, see the references in Hvalvik 1996, 21 n. 26.

[130] Translation from Cary 1925, 446–447.

[131] It would seem to me that contemporary research in this field is not too familiar to those studying Barnabas: Neither Hvalvik 1996, nor Prostmeier 1999, cite anything newer than Schäfer 1981, and not even it in this context. Rhodes 2004a, 80, has noticed the criticism of "at least one scholar"; i.e. Bowersock 1980, 137–138. Even Carleton Paget 1994, 24–25, who is critical of such temple himself, fails to mention critics later than Alon 1984, 441–448.

[132] See especially Eliav 1997, 127–. I am most grateful to prof. Eliav, who in 2010 provided me a copy of this article, which at that time was very hard to attain. Also Eliav 2005, 83–124. Others

He reminds that the above quotation from Cassius Dio is not actually the original text, but it is preserved only in an abridgement made by Xiphilinus, an 11th century monk. Eliav concludes that Xiphilinus has reformulated the passage with theological motivations and relocated the temple of Jupiter from the city to the Temple Mount.[133] Whereas Hvalvik occupies himself mostly discussing the differing chronologies of Cassius Dio and Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4:6),[134] Eusebius doesn't even deserve a discussion from Eliav in this context, since his passage is but one of the many texts used for reconstructing the history of the temple, but which don't mention the temple at all![135] If the later texts claim there was something on the mountain, it was a couple of statues.[136] The textual results are corroborated by archaeological evidence from the temple mount (or more precisely the lack of it). Eliav himself offers a reconstruction of Aelia Capitolina as a small colony located neighbouring, but completely outside of, the Temple Mount.[137]

I am not aware of any detailed critique of Eliav's position as of the time of writing, and it has been accepted by several others. It should be given full weight in the discussion of Barn. 16. Eliav is himself quite clear about the implications:

> The Epistle of Barnabas provides a typical example of the type of process that could result in scholars conceiving of a sanctuary that never existed. – – Barnabas's account contains no evidence whatsoever that could tie it either to Hadrian's reign or to an attempt to establish a pagan shrine at that time.[138]

If he is right, then of course not only is a Hadrianic temple not an easy solution—it is not an option at all.

In my view Eliav along with his predecessors has successfully shown the weaknesses of the "story – – commonly told".[139] The temple of Jupiter is more often read into texts than from them, and has been based on little evidence. In this respect his work is a representative example of the Bar Kokhba research of recent decades,

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coming to this conclusion include Mildenberg 1980, 332–333; Bowersock 1980, 137–138; Isaac 1990, 353–354; Schäfer 1990, 288–289; Wharton 2000, 197; Irshai 2009, 484 n. 49; Sivan 2009, 370.

[133] Eliav 1997, 131–143; Earlier Bowersock 1980, 137–138, had suggested that the text means the new temple was built only "instead of" the Jewish one, not on its place; given as a possibility also by Carleton Paget 1994, 25. Eliav 1997, 132–133, is critical of this view.

[134] Hvalvik 1996, 22–23.

[135] Eliav 2005, 86–94, 135–146.

[136] Eliav 2005, 92–94.

[137] Eliav 2005, 94–116; 2003.

[138] Eliav 2005, 88. On the other hand, for a plausible argument using the epistle as evidence for two Hadrianic edicts which otherwise having meager support (the pre-war temple and the ban to circumcision), see D. R. Schwartz 1992, 151–153. Such inference from the epistle shouldn't be discounted a priori, at least concerning the temple; surely the passage is not "a typical example" compared to the much inferior ones Eliav 2005, 88–92, presents after it.

[139] Eliav 2005, xxxv.

where one-time facts have often been shown to be mere possibilities.[140]

However, neither is his own reconstruction self-evident. He has pointed out questionable readings from the proponents of the old view, but there are cases where his own readings seem unsatisfactory as well.[141] Lack of archaeological evidence is hardly conclusive either, though he is right to criticize the explanations given for it. But these are petty grumbles. In the end, everything depends on Cassius Dio. While I'm generally against using redaction for explaining away passages that won't fit a theory, I admit that this case is exceptional: we can name the redactor! Yet recognizing redactional elements and a possible motive doesn't amount to a proof.[142]

Between no temple of Jupiter and a post-war temple of Jupiter there is one option to my knowledge still unexplored: what if Cassius Dio (or Xiphilinus) is right to locate the temple *before* the war, and after the war the plan was discarded? It would cause no contradictions with any of the post-war evidence Eliav discusses, and there would be no need for the reconstructions of interpolation. The question remaining is, would Hadrian really have committed such a provocation?[143] Perhaps—and it is not sure whether he himself would have thought of it as an offence at all. In this case the Hadrianic temple, even if it remained just a plan and was never actually built, could provide the context for Barn. 16.

Without going into more detail with the above suggestion, Eliav's theory must be held most probable. It's perhaps wise to suspend judgement for now.[144] The Capitoline temple remains an option for Barn. 16:4, but it should not be treated as an easy solution.

To sum up, both Jewish and pagan temple should be considered plausible solutions, yet both depend on uncertain historical reconstructions. On the other hand, the spiritual temple has problems with the text itself. Even though it would provide a way out of the improbabilities of history, it should not be considered an option.

3.3 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 is filled with apocalyptic warnings and imagery, but in addition the author gives the following description:

[140] For an introduction, see Schäfer 2003.

[141] Barn. 16:4 as "a typical example" would be one. He does also explain away quite lightly the term "Capitol" in the two seventh-century documents published by Flusin 1992, 17–31, and I am not sure about Chronicon Paschale and Eusebius either. See Eliav 2005, 88, 91–92, 89–91, 135–139.

[142] S. Schwartz 2006, 34 n. 31.

[143] Eliav 2005, 117.

[144] Along with S. Schwartz 2006, 34 n. 31.

> **4** And so also says the prophet: "Ten kingdoms will reign over the earth, and after them a little king will arise, who will subdue three of the kings with a single blow."[145] **5** Similarly Daniel says, concerning the same one: "And I saw the fourth beast, wicked and powerful and more dangerous than all the beasts of the earth, and how ten horns sprang up from it, and from these a little offshoot of a horn, and how it subdued three of the large horns with a single blow."[146] **6** You ought, therefore, to understand. (Barn. 4:4–6a)

Although many modern commentators give this passage no value in dating, I think such an approach is hard to justify: Why would the author otherwise exhort the readers to understand?[147] Most probably this neglect is due to the problems combining the different datings suggested by the two key passages.

Hvalvik is right to remind that these kinds of adaptings of apocalyptics to history are not precise.[148] But it does not follow that the author himself wouldn't have found these prophecies highly relevant to his time. What can be expected, then, is that even an explanatio seeming artificial to us could be the one the author meant. This passage is problematic for dating, but not irrelevant.

Many identifications of the "offshoot" have been proposed, from Vespasian to a Nero redivivus expected to slay Hadrian.[149] What adds to the complexity, the epistle could have been written either during the reign of the offshoot or his predecessor, though fortunately this can mostly be ignored in the identification. There are two numbers in the text that should be accounted for: the total of the kings (10) and the number of the subdued kings (3). In addition it would be best to explain the author's two additions to the Danielic text: the description of the last king as an offshoot (παραφυάδιον, probably emphasizing smallness), and the subduing of the three kings "with a single blow" (ὑφ ἕν, probably emphasizing simultaneousness). Whether the modifications were made by the author or his sources is probably of little consequence.

The clearest and most helpful of these is the triumvirate of the subdued kings, a detail surely important to the author. Three possible options are available: contenders Galba, Otho and Vitellius (subdued by Vespasian),[150] the Flavians Vespasian, Titus and Domitian (followed by Nerva) and a family by adoption Nerva, Trajan and

[145] Dan 7:24. There is variance between "king" and "kingdom", as there is in Dan 7:17–27. It should not be given significance.

[146] Dan 7:7–8

[147] Contra Tugwell 1989, 29–30, who, despite using the passage for dating, says it "mean[s], surely, that it is necessary to understand God's will correctly, not that it is necessary to understand the prophecies." Cf. Mark 13:14.

[148] Hvalvik 1996, 26, 30.

[149] For an excellent review, including the more exotic positions, see Hvalvik 1996, 27–32.

[150] The reign of Vespasian can in fact be reached another way too: perhaps the author was waiting for a Nero redivivus to come and slay all the Flavians together (ὑφ ἕν)? This is the view of Lightfoot 1891, 240–241; Bartlet 1899, 374; and Tugwell 1989, 30.

Hadrian (followed by Antoninus Pius).

The last triad is surely extremely strained, Antoninus Pius was after all an adopted son (even if only the second choice) and there was no simultaneousness. Yet it could have been a plausible interpretation while Hadrian was still in power. The other two options seem more probable: The Flavians were strongly associated,[151] and the rival emperors were literally simultaneous. Both Vespasian and Nerva can be legitimately called "little offshoot[s]", since Vespasian was from a lowly family[152]and Nerva wasn't a strong emperor.[153]Either would presumably fit the words ὑφ ἕν, though in the case of Nerva it is hard to really speak of subduing (ταπεινώσει/ἐταπείνωσεν). In light of the number three, the reigns of Vespasian, Domitian, Nerva, and Hadrian seem possible.

The number ten is ambiguos enough to be fitted to many different solutions. First of all, it is uncertain whether the offshoot should be counted as number 10 or 11. There are also numerous emperors and emperor candidates for whom it is unclear whether they should be included or not (Julius Ceasar, Galba, Otho, Vitellius).[154] It's common that scholars make fanciful emendations to the numbering in order to reach a particular emperor;[155] but it should be remembered that similar tricks may have been used by the author of the epistle as well.

Hvalvik is quite right that Vespasian is the neatest solution.[156] However, if the author is here dependent on a source, Vespasian might just have been the solution of the earlier writer, while the author of the epistle would have adapted the text to his own historical circumstances. Nerva is a possibility, and can be reached in several ways.[157]

The last triad is obviously the hardest to fit the number 10 to, and results in strained interpretations.[158] Perhaps in this case it would be justifiable to do away with the number ten? Or perhaps it could be seen as symbolic, representing the full number of kings? Whichever the solution, it mustn't be considered impossible. If the

[151]Lightfoot 1891, 240–241.
[152]Hvalvik 1996, 30.
[153]Richardson & Shukster 1983, 40.
[154]E.g. Veil 1904, 215–217, omits all of these.
[155]See Hvalvik 1996, 29–32.
[156]Hvalvik 1996, 29–30, see there also for a refutation of some of the counterarguments to Vespasian.
[157]Richardson & Shukster 1983, 39–40, discard the number ten, in my view thoughtlessly. Rather it should be said that the author may have had any of several possible different schemes in mind: excluding Vitellius and in addition either Otho or Julius Caesar seem to me the most viable scholarly options; see Hvalvik 1996, 29–31.
[158]See Hvalvik 1996, 29–32.

author wrote during the reign of Hadrian, such lines of thought would be conceivable. After all, he would have been a man living the last times, waiting for Nero redivivus to appear at any moment.

Another feature of chapter 4 that has some relevance to the dating is the apocalypticism. Present age is apparently spiritually dangerous (4:1, 9), last offence is coming (4:3, 9) and Evil is in power (4:9, 13), also 2:1). The Black One ruling is obviously not an emperor, but the Devil (see 20:1). Even though the reference is surely more general, verse 3 could perhaps be understood so that the offshoot is not yet in power? Then Nerva should be excluded. Yet ambiquity remains. The dangerousness of the present age would support an emperor who (from the Christian point of view) was particularly evil, though the dangers do seem immaterial. On these grounds Domitian and Hadrian would be better choices than Nerva or Vespasian—but we scarcely have sufficient knowledge about the early Christian attitudes, or even the persecutions.

The value of Barn. 4:4–6a to dating is perhaps limited. Nevertheless, in light of it the reigns of Domitian and Nerva are justifiable, the reign of Hadrian at most acceptable. Vespasian would be a very strong candidate, were it not for chapter 16, which most proponents of him have dispensed with, suggesting groundless spiritual interpretations.

3.4 Additional arguments

There are some additional details that have been used for dating. First of all, the epistle isn't a product of the apostolic age, since apostles are referred to somewhat distantly (5:9).[159] But surely this is not an argument even against the reign of Vespasian? It has also been suggested that the "epistolary framing" of the writing shows it somewhat early,[160] but epistolary form is well attested for the whole range of possible datings.

Cunningham suggests that the epistle should be dated early (i.e. Vespasian) because it betrays no knowledge of gnosticism nor organized church.[161] The argument is based on locating the epistle to Alexandria, or at least presupposing knowledge of Alexandrian Christianity. The gnosticism part is plausible, since during the reign

[159] E.g. Prostmeier 1999, 118.

[160] Prostmeier 1999, 118.

[161] Cunningham 1877, xxxvi–xxxix. Against this Koester 2000, 282, infers that the epistle's language of Christian "faith as true 'gnosis' (21.4) indicates the anti-Gnostic orientation of this ecclesiastical piety." The reference seems wrong; perhaps Barn. 1:5 or 13:7 is meant? In any case, this seems far-fetched. Also Schweitzer 1959, 160–161, comments on the primitive, "Johannine" ecclesiology.

of Hadrian the gnostic teacher Basilides was teaching in Alexandria. Unfortunately the point about organized church is based on the mention of bishops and presbyters in the alleged letter from Hadrian to Servianus found in Historia Augusta, which few today would hold authentic.[162] Though intriguing, this argumentum ex silentio is rather weak.

Somewhat more weight should be given to the suggestion of D. R. Schwartz that the author refers to the Hadrianic ban of circumcision (9:3).[163] This would then both fix the date of the epistle and prove the existence of such ban before the war (or just conceivably after). But that is quite a lot to prove based on only one verse, and other exegetical solutions are perhaps possible.[164]

3.5 What if…

Finally, one dissident voice should be noted: Rothschild has recently proposed that the epistle is significantly later, and reflects the situation in Alexandria in the beginning of the third century. She bases her proposition on Barn. 4:9b–13:

> **9b**Consequently, let us be on guard in the last days, for the whole time of our faith will do us no good unless now, in the age of lawlessness, we also resist, as befits God's children, the coming stumbling blocks, lest the black one (ὁ μέλας) find an opportunity to sneak in.
>
> – –
>
> **13**Let us never fall asleep in our sins, as if being "called" were an excuse to rest, lest the evil ruler (ὁ πονηρὸς ἄρχων) gain power over us and thrust us out of the kingdom of the Lord.

Other commentators have typically identified "the black one" with the Devil in line with Barn. 20:1. Rothschild however concludes that here both "'the Black one' (v. 10a) and 'the wicked archon' (v. 13b)" refer to the emperor.[165]

After the year of the five emperors (AD 193) Septimus Severus (reign AD 193–211) was left victorious and "became the first Roman emperor to have been born in Africa".[166] He later appointed his sons Caracalla (reign AD 198–217) and Geta (reign AD 209–211) as co-regents (Augusti), and for a while before his death in February 211 the three reigned together. Afterwards the brothers shared the rule, but in December 26th Caracalla had Geta murdered, thus becoming the sole emperor.

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[162]Hist. Aug. Saturninus 8. For the text see Magie 1932, 398–401. Cunningham 1877, xxxix, doesn't cite the letter himself, but is based here on; Lightfoot 1888, 225–226, who judges the letter genuine. For the argument that the letter is a forgery, see e.g. Galimberti 2010, 111–112.

[163]D. R. Schwartz 1992, 152–153.

[164]See the criticism of Carleton Paget 1994, 29. But in my view Schwartz's position has the upper hand.

[165]Rothschild 2019, 229–230. There is some fluctuation in verse boundaries between editions: ἵνα μὴ σχῇ παρείσδυσιν ὁ μέλας is in verse 9 in Holmes 2007, 390–391; in verse 10 in Prigent & Kraft 1971, 100–101; and confusingly in verse 9 in the Greek but in verse 10 in the translation in Ehrman 2003, 22–23; and Prostmeier 2018, 82–83.

[166]Rothschild 2019, 240.

According to Rothschild, this was seen by the author of the epistle as the fulfullment of the prophecy of one horn subduing the three (Barn. 4:4–5 = Dan 7:24, 7–8), and "[i]t is possible to see the fourth beast as Severus" as he was the last of the four emperor candidates to survive after Commodus. The author calls Caracalla black not because of his African descent, but because of the deity, Serapis, he worshipped, and who was associated with the black color. In addition black is a useful pejorative term, being the color of the scary Ethiopians. Thus "reference to the counter-divine as 'the Black One' – – indicates Caracalla *and* Serapis".[167]

The particular historical context is when Caracalla rebuilt the temple of Serapis in Alexandria, and some, perhaps Basilidean, Christians went to worship there, which explains the author's interest in the temple theme. "Caracalla finished the magnificent Serapeum in Alexandria in 215 CE, the same year he issued the edict expelling Egyptians from Alexandria and roughly the same year in which the Epistle of Barnabas is first attested." The role of the Jews in the epistle "is an allegory".[168]

What to make of all this? It needs to be acknowledged that the reconstruction is ingenious, and would explain very well some aspects of the prophecies in Barn. 4. It gives a plausible historical context where apocalypticism would be understandable from an Alexandrian writer. Even the attack against physical temple worship in Barn. 16 fits nicely.

The reconstruction discounts the number 10 (Barn. 4:4–5), but that's perhaps of small importance. The identity of the offshoot as one of the three subdued, however, is not. I find it incredible that according to Rothschild in Barn. 4:5 "the more natural reading of the Greek is that one of three takes over",[169] while the text itself reads that "a *little offshoot* of a horn – – subdued three of the *large* horns with a single blow" (ἐξ αὐτῶν μικρὸν κέρας παραφυάδιον – – ἐταπείνωσεν ὑφ' ἕν τρία τῶν μεγάλων κεράτων). Are we reading the same text?[170]

But most condemning for this proposition is that it simply dates the epistle too late. For the temple of Serapis to be relevant would require a date of AD 215 or after, the same time Clement of Alexandria is supposed to have died. Discounting the temple, to see Caracalla as the offshoot would require a date of AD 212. Even if we modify the reconstruction and say that the epistle was written while all three still lived, a date of AD 209 is required. And while such solution would remove the

[167]Rothschild 2019, 237, 240–243, emphasis in the original.
[168]Rothschild 2019, 243–245.
[169]Rothschild 2019, 240 n. 84.
[170]Prigent & Kraft 1971, 94, lists no variants.

problem with undestanding the little horn as one of the three, at the same time it would make the exegesis much less compelling.

Even if Clement wrote all his works on his deathbed, how come would he—and Origen and others—ever have thought this recent (recently found?) writing to originate with the apostolic Barnabas? Paradoxically, even Rothschild herself seems to find these dates too late: "I am currently working with the assumption that Barnabas was written before Clement of Alexandria (182–202 CE) cited it."[171] More weaknesses could be discussed, e.g. the role of Judaism in the epistle, but that's hardly necessary. Rothschild's reconstruction of the date and setting of the epistle is extremely improbable. Nevertheless, she has made interesting observations about the epithet "black" (μέλας) and its possible connotations in the epistle, and her article should be consulted accordingly.

3.6 Conclusions

The question of dating is bound to remain a controversial one. Reasonably strong cases can be made for the reigns of Vespasian, Nerva and Hadrian. Probably a case could be made for the reign of Domitian, too. All of these lead to historical uncertainties with chapter 16, but that seems unavoidable. It's best to settle for the range AD 70–135, as more precise datings cannot be adequately justified. Hvalvik is wise not to tie his reconstruction of purpose to his reconstruction of dating. His example should be followed.

[171] Rothschild 2019, 229 n. 35.

4 Provenance

4.1 Stating the question

As dating, the provenance of the Epistle of Barnabas is a disputed question. For a letter, provenance could in fact mean two different things: origin and destination. These are often treated together,[172] but if the writing is actually an epistle, these two questions should have at least slightly different answers. The author clearly alleges that he's writing from a distance (Barn. 1:3b, 5):

> **3b** How overwhelmed I was, on your account, by the long-desired sight of you! – – **5** Accordingly, since I have concluded that if I case enough bout you to share something of what I have received, I will be rewarded for having ministered to such spirits, I have hastened to send you a brief note, so that along with your faith you might have perfect knowledge as well.

Nevertheless it should be noted, that there's no need to posit a far off destination. While the likes of Paul and Pliny the Younger did send letters across vast distances, letters were also used over short ranges.[173] A distance as small as 100 km would easily explain the need for this method of communication, but would unfortunately be undetectable from the data we have.

Four locations have been put forth: Asia Minor (or more specifically Philadelphia),[174] Syria-Palestine (or Antioch),[175] Rome[176] and Egypt (or Alexandria). Of these, Rome has only been suggested as a destination and Syria-Palestine as an origin. Asia Minor and Egypt have been offered for both.

Many different kinds of justifications have been given for the different locations. Of the most common ones, similarities (or differences) with other ancient texts, methods of argumentation (i.e. allegory) and subjects relate foremost to origin. On the other hand, reception and possible *Sitz im Leben* indicate chiefly the destination. There are also some specific arguments which don't fit these categories.

There would be many possible ways to arrange this material. The most common is to treat the arguments for each location separately.[177] I will hazard another way of approach, and divide the material based on the different kinds of evidence.

[172] Cf. Hvalvik 1996, 35, who attributes this tendency to regarding the writing not a letter in the true sense. Origin and destination are clearly separated by Bartlet 1899, 376–378 (sent from Syria to Alexandria); and Völter 1904, 414–415 (from Alexandria to Rome).

[173] See Dana 2015; Sarri 2018, 55. Naturally the great majority of short distance letters were nothing comparable to the Epistle of Barnabas, but short notes, most often on ostraca, over practical or even trivial matters.

[174] Müller 1869, 13 (perhaps noncommittaly?), Wengst 1980, 117–118; Lindemann 1979, 282.

[175] Bartlet 1899, 377–378; Shukster & Richardson 1986, 17–20; Murray 2004, 48.

[176] Lipsius 1869, 364–365; Völter 1888, 414–415.

[177] So e.g. Carleton Paget 1994, 30–42; Hvalvik 1996, 35–42.

4.2 Similarities with Other Writings

The main way for determining the origin of the epistle has been to look for its similarities with contemporary literature. This is a useful method, but with a couple of caveats: First, for other documents too there's often little to no direct evidence of provenance, and their locations are inferred with the same method. Consequently the assesments are interrelated. Second, discovering the geography of sources or theological influences isn't a guarantee of the author's own nationality, much less his location at the time of writing—especially if the sources are widely spread themselves. Such wide spread is a fact in the case of the Epistle of Barnabas.

Egypt has always been the majority opinion, and one cannot deny that Alexandria is a natural choice for a text with extended use of allegorical interpretation.[178] While sometimes the use of allegorical method is seen as a clear earmark of being Alexandrian, it has long been recognized that allegory was also extensively used elsewhere, and thus by itself it proves little.[179] While there are also more particular similarities with Alexandrian allegorists Philo and Aristeas, there are no clear literary dependencies.[180] The theology of the epistle contains one Alexandrian catchword: γνῶσις. On the other hand, another catchword, λόγος, is missing.[181] Perhaps the most important counteragument is the epistle's strong emphasis on eschatology, atypical of Alexandrian texts.[182] Possibly Egyptian Second Enoch is an exception, and has plausible parallels with the epistle.[183]

Eschatology would rather fit Syria-Palestine region. There are also numerous similarities with texts often located there: In the New Testament these include Matthew,[184] Hebrews[185] and the speech of Stephen in Acts 7.[186] In addition, the epis-

[178] See Barn. 6:8–19, 9, 10, 11.

[179] Bartlet 1899, 376–377; Wengst 1984, 116; Shukster & Richardson 1986, 18–19.

[180] The treatment of food laws (Barn. 10, *Spec.* 4:100–118, Let. Aris. 141–169) is the obvious example. For comments and more references, see Carleton Paget 1994, 31,37–38; Hvalvik 1996, 119–122.

[181] R. A. Kraft 1965, 48; Prigent & Kraft 1971, 21; Shukster & Richardson 1986, 20.

[182] See Barn. 2:1, 4:1–5, 9b–14, 5:7, 11:8, 16:5, 21:1–6. Prigent & Kraft 1971, 21; Shukster & Richardson 1986, 20.

[183] Gunther 1983, 22. Cf. 2 En. 32–33, Barn. 15:8–9.

[184] Especially the quotation in Barn. 4:14: "as it is written: 'many called, but few chosen'" (πολλοὶ κλητοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοὶ) = Matt 22:14 (πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσιν κλητοὶ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί). For discussion and more references, see Scorza Barcellona 1975, 63–65; Massaux 1950, 59–84; Hvalvik 1996, 32–34.

[185] So Bartlet 1899, 377–378.

[186] And with Stephen the assumed group of Hellenists. See e.g. how both use Isa 66:1–2 (Acts 7:49–50, Barn. 16:2) similarly and in the same textual form. Barnard 1960, 36–45, posits a direct dependency on Stephen's speech or even Acts. See also Prigent & Kraft 1971, 23; and the discussion in Carleton Paget 1994, 200–207.

tle has affinities with Didache,[187] Odes of Solomon,[188] Enochian texts,[189] Qumran texts[190] and rabbinic texts.

Asia Minor has sometimes been suggested as the epistle's origin, and one of the reasons has been the affinities Barnabas seems to have with many texts that can be located to Asia Minor with high certainty, be it Pastoral epistles,[191] Pauline texts in general,[192] Johannine texts,[193] Revelation,[194]

Today the key problem with using these texts to determine the provenance is often recognized: they can only trace the locations of the numerous influences in Barnabas, not the location of the author himself.[195] And it has to be accepted that these influences are numerous. This isn't necessarily unexpected, as for example Clement of Alexandria had heard teachers from diverse locations (*Strom*. 1:1):

> – – [M]y memoranda are – – an image and outline of those vigorous and animated discourses which I was privileged to hear, and of blessed and truly remarkable men.
>
> Of these the one, in Greece, an Ionic; the other in Magna Graecia: the first of these from Coele-Syria, the second from Egypt, and others in the East. The one was born in the land of Assyria, and the other a Hebrew in Palestine.
>
> When I came upon the last (he was the first in power), having tracked him out concealed in Egypt, I found rest.[196]

Like Clement after him, the author of the Epistle of Barnabas bears similarities with, and probably carries influences from, many different areas. The arguments from

[187]In addition to the Two Ways (Did. 1:1–6:1 ≈ Barn. 18–20), see Did. 16:2: "Gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, *for all the time* you *have believed will be of no use to* you *if* you are *not* found perfect *in the last time.*" (πυκνῶς δὲ συναχθήσεσθε ζητοῦντες τὰ ἀνήκοντα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· οὐ γὰρ ὠφελήσει ὑμᾶς ὁ πᾶς χρόνος τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, ἐὰν μὴ ἐν τῷ ἐσχάτῳ καιρῷ τελειωθῆτε.)

≈ Barn. 4:9b "Consequently, let us be on guard in the *last* days, *for the whole time of* our *faith will do* us *no good unless* now, *in the age* of lawlessness, we also resist, as befits God's childen, the coming stumbling blocks, lest the black one find an opportunity to sneak in." (Διὸ προσέχωμεν ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις· οὐδὲν γὰρ ὠφελήσει ἡμᾶς ὁ πᾶς χρόνος τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν, ἐὰν μὴ νῦν ἐν τῷ ἀνόμῳ καιρῷ καὶ τοῖς μέλλουσιν σκανδάλοις, ὡς πρέπει υἱοῖς θεοῦ, ἀντιστῶμεν, ἵνα μὴ σχῇ παρείσδυσιν ὁ μέλας.)

[188]R. A. Kraft 1961, 239, mentions Odes Sol. 27, Odes Sol. 42:1–2 (outstreched arms = cross, cf. Barn. 12:2); for more, see Prigent & Kraft 1971, 22–24.

[189]Bartlet 1899, 378: "In these regions he had met with – – a Christianized recension of the Book of Enoch, which he cites by name – –". But the verse in question (4:3) cannot be identified with any extant Enoch text, and indeed it's unclear what part of the verse would form the quote.

[190]In addition to 1QS 3:13–4:26 discussed above (see page 6), see Kister 1990; and the discussion in Carleton Paget 1994, 195–200.

[191]Wengst 1984, 117–118; Prostmeier 1999, 127.

[192]Pfleiderer 1890, 393, 404–406; Lindemann 1979, 272–282; Carleton Paget 1994, 207–214.

[193]Braun 1958; Schweitzer 1959, 160–161; Hvalvik 1996, 40–41. None claim Asia Minor to be the location for the epistle, though. See also Carleton Paget 1994, 225–230.

[194]Bartlet 1899, 377 n. 1, though he sees this only as an influence and doesn't locate the epistle there. Ferguson 1990, There is some discussion whether Barn. 15 implies chiliasm (i.e. premillennialism) or not, a question on which I'm currently undecided. For a review of the positions and a case against chiliasm, see.

[195]Carleton Paget 1994, 36; Hvalvik 1996, 43–44.

[196]Translation from W. Wilson 1867, 355, in the footnotes these teachers are deduced to include Tatian, Theodotus of Byzantium and Pantaenus. For noticing this text, I'm indebted to Shukster & Richardson 1986, 18.

similarities bear less weight than one would have hoped. It seems futile to try to deduce provenance from them. Nevertheless, the proliferation of influences does tell something interesting about the author: he either heaped up teachers for himself like Clement or was a well-travelled itinerant teacher himself.

4.3 Sitz im Leben

Asia Minor is sometimes seen as a fitting context for the epistle. In addition to the literature mentioned above, speaking for it is the known strong presence of Jews there,[197] not to mention Judaizers. Both are routinely, most often negatively, commented upon in early Christian texts (Acts 13:45–14:20, 18:19, 24–26, 19:10–17, 33–34, 20:19, 21, 21:27, 24:18, Gal 5:1–12, Rev 2:9, 3:9, Ign. *Phld*. 6:1, Ign. *Magn*. 8:1–9:1, 9:1, Mart. Pol. 12:2, 13:1, 17:2–18:1).[198]

The foremost proponent of Asia Minor, or more particulartly Philadelphia, is Wengst, basing his proposal on what he believes is the right kind of *Sitz im Leben* for the writing.[199] Calling for unity, Ignatius writes to the Philadelphians (8:2):

> Moreover, I urge you to do nothing in a spirit of contentiousness, but in accordance with the teaching of Christ. For I heard some people say, "If I do not find it in the archives, I do not believe in the gospel." And when I said to them, "It is written", they answered me, "That is precisely the question." But for me, the "archives" are Jesus Christ, the unalterable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith that comes through him; by these things I want, through your prayers, to be justified.

Once accepted that Ignatius might have different adversaries in mind at different locations, it's plausible to see a connection between the author of the Epistle of Barnabas and these Philadelphians Ignatius disagrees with: The epistle, too, seems to try to prove everything using Old Testament scriptures. While Wengst dates the Epistle of Barnabas to 130–132, some 20 years later than Ignatius, the author might well belong to the same school or tradition.[200]

Wengst's reconstruction is interesting in that it could be used to support both origin and destination. The interpretation is anything but apparent, though. While the quote from Ignatius is interesting, it is possible that the group he describes actually consists of Judaizers, since Ignatius comments on them just before (Ign. *Phld*. 6:1).[201] As it is quite possible that the Epistle of Barnabas is directed against Judaizers, it could be equally well argued that these are exactly the people the author is struggling against!

[197] Müller 1869, 13.

[198] It should be noted, though, that there are similar texts about Macedonia and Achaia too (Acts 17:5–13, 18:6, 12, 2 Cor 11:22), 1 Thess 2:14–16).

[199] Wengst 1971, 117–118.

[200] Wengst 1971, 112–113, 117–118.

[201] For the same point and others, see Carleton Paget 1994, 231–234.

With the same logic of similarity, also the Therapeutae, a possibly Essene[202] group practicing allegorical interpreation Philo (*Contempl.* 1–4) tals about, have been suggested as the background of the author.[203] According to Philo (*Contempl.* 3), Therapeutae had a significant community near Alexandria. He also mentions some other more radical allegorists, who abandoned the physical observations of the allegorized commandments (*Migr.* 16:89–93).[204] But in the end, groups that try to prove everything with the Scriptures aren't a Philadelphian or Alexandrian curiosity. Numerous descriptions of such groups are available.[205] Indeed, even the Devil (Matt 4:1–11/Luke 4:1–13) could be found in these details.

Völter has suggested that Rome would have been the most probable destination of the epistle, and that its *Sitz im Leben* corresponds with that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which he also judges to have been sent from Alexandria to Rome. Specifically, based on his analysis of two Roman texts, 1 Clement and Shepherd of Hermas, "the majority" of the Roman congregation at the time was leaning towards Judaism.[206] In addition, apparently the Epistle of Barnabas was known to the writer of Shepherd of Hermas (Vision 3 = 9–21).[207]

Today few even bother to refute this view. Apart from the claim that Shepherd of Hermas knows the epistle, the whole case is based on conjecture. And again, even if a congregation in Rome was undergoing such a situation, it hardly precludes similar occasion elswhere. I for one also fail to see the similarities between Hermas (9–21) and the Epistle of Barnabas.

Sitz im Leben tends to provide very weak arguments for provenance. It often deteriorates into little more than begging the question, and in the end that's not surprising: For texts with known provenance, details from external sources can be used to reconstruct the Sitz im Leben and that in turn can contribute to our understanding of the text. Barring exceptional circumstances, following this sequence backwards with any useful degree of probability is nigh impossible. The evidence is reduced to a circular argument of mutual plausibility of the proposed providence and *Sitz im Leben*. While these reconstructions are interisting possibilities, they cannot stand on

[202]The Essene identification is not accepted by everybody, e.g. Taylor & Davies 1998.

[203]E.g. R. A. Kraft 1961, 288–230. For the text, see Colson 1941, 112–.

[204]These have been discussed as a possible background of the epistle by Windisch 1920, 395; Prigent 1961, 131–132. For the text, see Colson & Whitaker 1932, 182–185.

[205]E.g. Matthew, Paul and their communities. I am not claiming that all the others would be as good matches with the epistle, only that both use of allegory and reasoning with the Scriptures are common qualities of groups both ancient and modern.

[206]Völter 1888, 414–415; Similarly Lipsius 1869, 365.

[207]Völter 1888, 414. This point, of course, rather belongs to the reception of the epistle.

their own without support from other arguments, and thus have no value for determining origin or destination.

4.4 Reception

4.4.1 Reception up to the 4th Century

The popularity of positing Egyptian provenance is no wonder considering the reception of the epistle: The earliest sources to quote the Epistle of Barnabas are Alexandrian writers Clement (c. AD 150–215)[208] and Origen (c. AD 184–253).[209] Of later authors to refer to the epistle, Didymus the Blind (c. AD 313–398)[210] is Alexandrian, while Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 265–340)[211] and Jerome (c. AD 347–420)[212] are not. Two more Egyptian texts cite the epistle: First, a writing at the end of the Sacramentary often attributed to Serapion of Thmuis (4th century), quotes the epistle[213] So does also Papyrus Berolinensis 20915, an anonymous Egyptian text.[214]

Of other ancient writers, Tertullian (*Pud.* 20) does mention an "Epistle of Barnabas" (Epistola Barnabae), but speaks obviously of Hebrews, which he then proceeds to quote ((Heb 6:4–8). According to Metzger Hippolytus of Rome knew the epistle,[215] but I was unable to verify this. The most promising text I could find was *Comm. Dan.* 26:

> *– – For the last shall be as the first; for I will set thy rulers as at the beginning, and thy leaders as before. And His voice was as the voice of a great multitude.* (Ἔσονται γὰρ τὰ ἔσχατα ὡς τὰ πρῶτα· θέσω γὰρ τοὺς ἄρχοντάς σου ὡς τὸ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, καὶ τοὺς ἡγουμένους σου ὡς τὸ πρότερον. Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αυτοῦ, ὡς φωνὴ ὄχλου πολλοῦ.) For all we who believe on Him in these days utter things oracular, as speaking by His mouth the things appointed by Him.[216]

This is a complex composite quotation: The end seems to combine Rev 14:2 with Rev 19:6. The middle part is very close to Isa 1:26a, yet almost every word is different from LXX! But the beginning can also be found in Barn. 6:13:

[208] Clement cites the Epistle of Barnabas by name several times in *Stromata*: *Strom*. 2:6 (Barn. 1:5, 2:2–3), 7 (Barn. 4:11), 15 (Barn. 10:1, 3, 9–10), 18 (Barn. 21:5–6, 9), 20 (Barn. 16:7–9), 5:8 (Barn. 10:4, 11–12), 10 (Barn. 6:5, 8–10). In *Strom*. 6:8 there's also a misattribution of 1 Clem. 48:4 to Barnabas. In other places Clement seems to be dependent on the epistle, but doesn't refer to it explicitly: *Paed*. 2:10 (6–7), 3:11 (Barn. 10:3–4, 11), 12 (Barn. 3:1–5?, Barn. 2:5, 10).

[209] By name: *Princ.* 3:2:4 (Barn. 18:1), *Cels.* 1:63 (Barn. 5:9). The Two Ways allusions in *Comm. Rom.* 1:18:6 and *Hom. Luc.* 35:3 seem to me too vague.

[210] *Comm. Zach.* 234:21–22 (ὁ μέλας Barn. 4:9, 20:1), 259:21–24 (Barn. 1:1)), 355:20–24 (ὁ μέλας), *Comm. Ps.* 262:34 (ὁ μέλας), 300:12–13 (Barn. 19:12))

[211] *Hist. eccl.* 3:25:4, 6:13:6, 14:1.

[212] *Vir. ill.* 6 ("Barnabas – – wrote one Epistle"), *Comm. Ezech.* 43:19 (Barn. 8:1–2?), *Pelag.* 3:2 (Barn. 5:9 wrongly attributed to Ignatius), *Tract. Ps.* 15 (Barn. 5:9, correctly this time), *Nom. hebr.* 119–120.

[213] Sacramentary 31:2 (Barn. 5:5). I use the numbering of Wobbermin 1898, which accords with the manuscript; not that of Funk 1905b, 158–195.

[214] 141–142 = B-12 = D2 (Barn. 6:11–12), 143–144 = B-6 (6:11–12 again), 149–150 = B-11 = A5 (6:17–18), notation depending on the publication.

[215] Metzger 1987, 151.

[216] Translation is from MacMahon & Salmond 1868, 456; Greek is from Migne 1857b, 657.

> Again I will show you how the Lord speaks to us. He made a second creation in the last days. And the Lord says: "Behold, I make the last things as the first." (ἰδού, ποιῶ τὰ ἔσχατα ὡς τὰ πρῶτα.) – –

Hippolytus and the Epistle of Barnabas are no doubt here reproducing the same tradition. Both also use the quote in context of a new creation, even if the epistle speaks about future and Hippolytus the present (σήμερον). Nevertheless on this evidence only it's hard to posit a direct dependence. It seems more probable that both writers knew this tradition independently.

Based on similarities, a host of other writers have been claimed to be dependent on the Epistle of Barnabas, even though they do not cite it by name. Shepherd of Hermas was already mentioned above.[217] These include Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Marcus (the founder of Marcosians), Gregory of Nyssa, Cyprian, Novatian, Epiphanius and Macarius of Egypt.[218] I consider these doubtful, and will not discuss them further.

Moving on to manuscript evidence, the epistle is included as the penultimate book, after Revelation and before Shepherd of Hermas, in the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus (**S**), also from Egypt.[219] In addition, it is included in Clermont List (or Catalogus Claromontanus), the origin of which Zahn and Harnack place in Alexandria c. AD 300.[220] It is a Latin list of biblical books and their stichometric lengths (under title "versus scribturarum sanctarum"), which is found in the middle of 6th century Codex Claromontanus, between Filemon and Hebrews.[221] There the Epistle of Barnabas is listed between Jude and Revelation, though there is a dash marked in front of it and a few other books: Shepherd of Hermas, Acts of Paul, Apocalypse of Peter and on the previous page, surprisingly, 1 Peter.[222] The only manuscript evidence outside of Egypt comes in the form of the Latin translation **L**.

[217] See footnote 207.

[218] See Windisch 1920, 301–302; Prostmeier 1999, 51.

[219] For more detail and a helpful discussion on whether this implies canonicity at the time, see Batovici 2016; also Carleton Paget 1994, 248–258.

[220] Zahn 1890, 157–172; Harnack 1904, 84–88. This is often accepted without comment, e.g. by Goodspeed 1942, 34–35; and Hvalvik 1996, 36. Prostmeier 1999, 58, gives a short discussion. I do not find the conclusion uncontestable, but the subject is beyond the scope of this work.

[221] The manuscript is at Bibliothèque nationale de France, and photographs of the whole codex are available at their website, Bibliothèque nationale de France 2012, 467v–468v. These aren't separate leaves, 467r contains the Latin text of Phlm 21–25 (from verse 21 only the last word "facies").

[222] Which is actually according to the text written "to Peter" (ad Petrum prima), as is 2 Pet (which has no dash). As the list is also missing some New Testament books completely, Metzger 1987, 230, 310–311, suggests that the scribe was "not very attentive"; similarly Prostmeier 1999, 58. I am no expert, but based on the photographs it seems to me the dashes aren't from the same hand as the list itself.

4.4.2 In Egypt

Clement of Alexandria did not only quote the Epistle of Barnabas several times, he held it in high regard. It seems that Clement even covered the epistle in his biblical commentary *Hypotyposeis*: Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 6:14:1) informs us:

> And in the Hypotyposeis, to speak briefly, [Clement] has made concise explanations of all the Canonical Scriptures, not passing over even the disputed writings, I mean the Epistle of Jude and the remaining Catholic Epistles, and the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Apocalypse known as Peter's.[223]

Whether this means that Clement considered the epistle canonical, a first order authoritative writing, is of course open to discussion—and moreover might depend on the definition of the word "canonical". Anyhow, it should be noted that Clement is not thoroughly uncritical of Barnabas. He teaches in *Paedagogus* (2:10):

> – – "Do not eat", [Moses] says, "the hare nor the hyena."
>
> [God] doesn't want humans to share their quality nor get a taste of such promiscuity, for indeed these animals are passionately fascinated with mating.
>
> It's said that *the hare grows another opening every year, and has the same number of orifices as [is the number of] years it has lived.* (τὸν μὲν λαγὼ κατ᾽ ἔτος πλεονεκτεῖν – – τὴν ἀφόδευσιν, ἰσαρίθμους οἷς βεβίωκεν ἔτεσιν ἴσχοντα τρύπας·) So by forbidding the eating of hare he indicates the perversion[224] of pederasty.
>
> And [it's said that] *the hyena alternates back and forth, from male to female, each year,* (τὴν δὲ ὕαιναν ἐναλλὰξ ἀμείβειν τὸ ἄρρεν εἰς τὸ θῆλυ παρ᾽ ἔτος ἕκαστον,) implying that the one abstaining from hyena shouldn't have appetite for adultery.
>
> I, too, agree that, in line with the preceding prohibitions, most wise Moses implied that we shouldn't resemble those animals. But by no means do I accept the explanation here [given to] the symbolic language!
>
> – –
>
> Neither, by no means, should it be believed that hyena sometimes changes its sex, for neither does the same animal have simulaneously both genitals, male and female, as some suppose, telling stories of hermaphrodites and introducing this third sex, androgyne, between female and male.[225]

While he—probably on purpose—doesn't cite the epistle by name here, there is no doubt that Clement criticizes Barn. 10:6–7:

> **6**Furthermore, "You shall not eat the hare." Why? Do not become, he means, one who corrupts children, or even resemble such people, because *the hare grows another opening every year, and thus has as many orifices as it is years old.* (ὁ λαγωὸς κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν πλεονεκτεῖ τὴν ἀφόδευσιν· ὅσα γὰρ ἔτη ζῇ, τοσαύτας ἔχει τρύπας.) **7**Again, "Neither shall you eat the hyena." Do not become, he means, an adulterer or a seducer, or even resemble such people. Why? *Because this animal changes its nature from year to year, and becomes male one time and female another.* (ὅτι τὸ ζῷον τοῦτο παρ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν ἀλλάσσει τὴν φύσιν, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν ἄρρεν, ποτὲ δὲ θῆλυ γίνεται.)

[223] Translation from Oulton 1932, 46–47.

[224] *ἀποτροπή*, see Lampe 1961, 218.

[225] Greek is from Marcovich & Winden 2002, 120–121, translation is my own. The passage was first brought to my attention by Metzger 1987, 134 n. 43. Little of the above is translated into English in Ante-Nicene Christian Library, W. Wilson 1867, 244–245, but instead "[f]or obvious reasons, we have given the greater part of this chapter in the Latin version", 244 n. 1; Lake 1912, 377, did likewise with Barn. 10:6–8 and reproduced the untranslated text of **L**.

The verbal agreement is significant, especially with the hare. Moreover, the prohibition to eat hyena is not found in the Law of Moses (cf. Lev 11:4–, Deut 14:7–).[226] While the legend about hyena's procreation is found in numerous ancient sources before and after,[227] as far as I'm aware Epistle of Barnabas is the earliest extant text to record the supposedly Mosaic prohibition to eat hyena. The only other candidate would be Physiologus (38), but it seems more probable that it used the epistle than the other way round.[228] When we add to this the knowledge that Clement knew and utilized the epistle elsewhere, it's obviously the source Clement used here.[229]

Clement is also probably dependent on the Epistle of Barnabas in *Paed*. 3:11, where he explains the food laws (swine, eagle, chewing the cud) similarly to Barn. 10:3–4, 11, and in *Paed*. 3:12, where he quotes Isa 1:11–14 and Ps 50:17 (LXX 51:19) in the the same form and with the same explanation as Barn. 2:5, 10. He also quotes Isa 58:4–10 just before, as the epistle does just after (Barn. 3:1–5)[230]

Origen doesn't employ the epistle as heavily as Clement, but he nevertheless does once cite it as an authority: After first reproducing a long series of quotations from elsewhere (Ps (LXX) 75:11 (≈ Ps 76:10), Eccl 10:4, 2 Cor 10:5, Ps (LXX) 83:5 (= Ps 84:5), 2 Cor 8:16, a mention of Tobit's angel (Tobit 8:2?), Zech 1:14, a synopsis of Herm. 36:1–4), he says (*Princ.* 3:2:4 ≈ Barn. 18:1):

> The same is declared by Barnabas in his Epistle, where he says there are two ways, one of light and one of darkness, over which he asserts that certain angels are placed,—the angels of God over the way of light, the angels of Satan over the way of darkness.[231]

This is clearly in a series of authoritative quotations. Yet it is the last of the list, and it is paraphrased, as are Shepherd of Hermas and Tobit, while the other quotations are verbatim. My command of Origen is poor, and I cannot say whether this is an isolated occurence, but it seems that the different styles of quotation reflect different statuses for the books. Perhaps the strongest indication that Origen did consider the epistle

[226]Hyenas do have negative connotations in both their LXX appearances (Jer 12:9, Sir 13:18). In addition, hyenas of course don't fulfill the requirements for an edible animal: it has paws instead of cloven hoofs and it's a carnivore instead of a ruminant (Lev 11:2–3, Deut 14:4–6).

[227]For discussion and references, see R. A. Kraft 1961, 200–209; and Pendergraft 1992, 77, who tells that even "[c]ontemporary zoologists find it difficult to determine the gender of most hyenas without recourse to bloodtests or dissection."

[228]Scott 1998, 437.

[229]So also Salminen 2010, 65, who concludes that Clement also inherited the prohibition against pederasty from the epistle. R. A. Kraft 1961, 200–209; Prostmeier 1999, 392; and Rothschild 2018, 414–416, 432–433, consider other interpretative options.

[230]I'm grateful to Prostmeier 1999, 45, 111, without whom I wouldn't have noticed these passages.

[231]Translation is from Crombie 1869, 231. The text is apparently only preserved in Latin; see Migne 1857c, 309: Eadem quoque Barnabas in Epistola sua declarat, cum duas vias esse dicit, unam lucis, alteram tenebrarum quibus et praeesse certos quosque angelos dicit: viae quidem lucis angelos Dei; tenebrarum autem viae angelos Satanae.

authoritative comes from the fact that he included it in his version of an etymological work on Hebrew names of the Bible. Origen's work is lost, but Jerome's later latin edition reflects it (*Nom. hebr.* 119–120).[232]

Didymus the Blind also cites the epistle among other authoritative literature (*Comm. Zach.* 259:21–24):

> Indeed, the apostle in Christ writes to Corinthians and Galatians, for ones: "I begot you through the gospel",[233] and for others: "my children, for whom I'm again in birth pains, until Christ takes form in you."[234] Peter also, the foremost among the apostles, wrote his letter as to his own children: "As obedient children, do not conform" to your former conduct.[235] Barnabas too, who was with Paul appointed apostle to the uncircumcised, when he sent a letter to those believing according to gospel, addresses it as to "sons and daughters".[236] And also the psalmist declares beforehand to those miraculously born of him: "Come, children, listen to me! I'll teach you the fear of the Lord. Who wants to live and loves to see good days?"[237]

Again we see this curious tendency: 1 Cor 4:15, Gal 4:19 and Ps (LXX) 33:12–13 (= Ps 34:11–12) are cited verbatim, 1 Pet 1:14 is partially abbreviated, but Barn. 1:1 is paraphrased. This phenomenon shows potential to be a subject for future study, but for now I'll cautiously disagree with Ehrman, when he concludes about the same passage: "Here Barnabas is called an apostle of the same rank as Paul, and his epistle is put on the same level as 1 Corinthians, Galatians and 1 Peter".[238]

The final Egyptian writer named to possibly refer to the Epistle of Barnabas is Serapion, a relatively unknown ally of Athanasius.[239] In 1984, A. Dmitrijewskij found from the monastery of Great Lavra an 11th century manuscript containing a collection of 30 liturgical prayers, today commonly referred to as the Sacramentary[240] of Serapion—presumably this publication was in Ukrainian.[241] The existence

[232] See below, section 4.4.3.

[233] 1 Cor 4:15.

[234] Gal 4:19.

[235] 1 Pet 1:14–15 abbreviated.

[236] ≈ Barn. 1:1

[237] Ps (LXX) 33:12–13 (= Ps 34:11–12). Translation is my own, Greek is from Doutreleau 1962, 760: Ὁ ἐν Χριστῷ γοῦν Ἀπόστολος Κορινθίοις καὶ Γαλάταις ἐπιστέλλει, τοῖς μέν· "Διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα", τοῖς δέ· "Τέκνα μου οὕς πάλιν ὠδίνω μέχρι οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν." Καὶ Πέτρος γοῦν ὁ τῶν ἀποστόλων πρόκριτος ὡς τεκνοις ἑαυτοῦ γράφει ἣν ἐχάραξεν ἐπιστολήν· "Ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς, μὲ συσχηματιζόμενοι κατὰ τὴν πρ[ο]τέραν ἀναστροφήν." Καὶ Βαρναβᾶς γο[ῦν καὶ] αὐτὸς μετὰ Παύλου ἀπόστολος ταχθεὶς ἐπὶ τῆς [ἀκρο]βυστίας, τοῖς κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πιστοῖς ἐπιστ[ολὴν δ]ιαπεμ[ψ]άμενος, προσφωνεῖ αὐτὴν ὡς υἱοῖς καὶ θυγάτρα[σ]ιν. [Καὶ ὁ] ὑ[μ]νῳδὸς δὲ τοῖς κατὰ ἀρετὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεννωμένοις προσφωνεῖ· "Δεῦτε, τέκνα, ἀκούσατέ μου, φόβον Κυρίου διδάξω ὑμᾶς. Τίς ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ὁ θέλων ζωὴν καὶ ἀγαπῶν ἡμέρας ἰδεὶν ἀγαθάς;"

[238] Ehrman 1983, 14. Self-evidently the degrees of literalness in quotes depend most of all on the author, and the comparisons are only meaningful within the works of one writer. For studies which consider the relationship between textual stability and authoritativeness, see e.g. Weissenberg 2014; Kujanpää 2020.

[239] On Serapion, see Rodopoulos 1957, 263–268; Griggs 1991; Quasten 1967.

[240] Also called Euchologium and Euchologion.

[241] I was unable to locate Smitrijewskij's edition. But see Brightman 1900, 276: "Dr. Mercati of the Vatican Library has been kind enough to point out to me that the *editio princeps* of the Sacramentary of Serapion is that of A. Smitrijewskij in *Trudy*, the journal of the Ecclestical Academy of Kiew, 1894 no. 2; reprinted separately at Kiew in the same year".

of the text didn't become common knowledge until five years later, after it was apparently independently found again by Wobbermin and published in the series Texten und Untersuchungen.[242] Along with the prayers, he also published a "dogmatic letter" (Sacramentary 31) titled About Father and Son (Περὶ πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ), which is positioned in the manuscript directly after the prayers.[243] The Sacramentary is an important witness to early liturgy, because of that has received much scholarly attention, including several editions and translations. The letter on the other hand is bypassed by all of these, and is largely forgotten.[244]Nevertheless, it's the letter that is relevant for the current enquiry, since it quotes the Epistle of Barnabas by name (Sacramentary 31:2 (Barn. 5:5)). But is Serapion its author?

The name of Serapion appears in the titles of two prayers, including the first (Sacramentary 1, 15). According to Brightman in Sacramentary 15 "prayers" (προσευχαὶ) is actually plural, which might suggest that the group Sacramentary 15–18 or even all of the prayers come from Serapion.[245] Going further, Wobbermin concluded that not only all the prayers but also the letter 31 originated with Serapion. His main reason is that the letter teaches the deity of the Son, but mentions Holy Spirit only once (31:2): a position which must belong to the time of the Arian controversy.[246] This argument doesn't really confirm Serapion as the writer for this anonymous text, but it is solid when it comes to the date—or rather it would rather a date some decades earlier than Serapion.[247] There is no mention of author in the manuscript, so positive evidence is lacking. There are also stylistic and theological differences with Serapion's other known texts[248] Notwithstanding, it is apparently due to this text that some scholars claim that Serapion knew the Epistle of Barnabas: Windisch adopted this position from Wobbermin, and it seems to me that he in turn was the source for later scholars:[249] While the letter most probably wasn't written by Serapion, it is a

[242]Wobbermin 1898, 3, calls the manuscript Pergament 149 (Pergamenthandschrift 149 der Bibliothek des Athosklosters Lawra), which probably isn't its current name. Currently Great Lavra manuscripts have an identifier with a greek letter and a number, e.g. B52 is Gregory-Aland 044 (Ψ).

[243]Wobbermin 1898, 25, "der dogmatische Brief".

[244]Editions and translations not reproducing the letter include Wordsworth 1899; Brightman 1899; 1900; Funk 1905b, 158–195, cf. XLI; Barrett-Lennard 1993.

[245]Brightman 1899, 90–91.

[246]Wobbermin 1898, 27–29.

[247]So Bardenhewer 1923, 102; earlier he had accepted the writing as genuine, though, see Bardenhewer 1901, 234–235. Fitschen 1992, 98, dates the writing even earlier, to the "second half of the 3rd century" ("2. Hälfte des 3. Jhd."). This seems to me improbable, since Arian controversy only began in the 4th century.

[248]These are treted by Wordsworth 1899, 19–23, who also relates the opinion of J. Armitage Robinson: "it is impossible for [the letter and Serapion's Treatise against the Manicheans] to be by the same author."

[249]Wobbermin 1898, 29; Windisch 1920, 301–302; R. A. Kraft 1961, 13 n. 13; Grant 1964, 18; R. A. Kraft 1965, 40; Jefford 2012, 5. Gunther 1983, 24, cites Wobbermin directly, and is aware of

4th century text, and almost certainly from Egypt, since all the other works in the same manuscript are Egyptian.[250] Although anonymous, it is a relevant witness of reception. The passage in question reads:

> So we say against the slander of the uneducated: the prolific[251] father was never without progeny, the rational father was never without reason, the wise father was never without wisdom. For to whom did he say, "Let us make man in our image and likeness",[252] if not to his son? Also "the word is God"[253] according to the Gospel of John. Likewise most worthy Barnabas, the apostle, called Son of Consolation, in his letter says, "To his son he said: 'Let us make man in our image and likeness.'"[254] And the holy apostle [= Paul] says in To the Romans, "Christ is God's power and God's wisdom",[255] and again in the same letter, "To the wise, unseen God alone be glory and honor for eternity, amen."[256] Besides, in the Gospel of John it says, "Nobody has ever seen God. But the only God Who Is in Father's bosom, he has revealed [him]."[257] But bosom is the full greatness of the body, – – (Sacramentary 31:2)[258]

Gen 1:26 and John 1:1, 18 are cited verbatim. 1 Cor 1:24 is exact apart from the modification from accusative to nominative needed to fit the context. In 1 Tim 1:17 there's some fluctuation in word order. Not too much weight should be put on these minute differences, since gathering from the incorrect citation the Pauline texts were probably quoted by heart. Once again the quotation from Barn. 5:5 is a paraphrase, and even corrects the position of ἡμετέραν in the quote (Gen 1:26) to conform with LXX.

An exception to this pattern of paraphrasing comes in the last Egyptian witness, the anonymous fragmentary writing in the 4th century Papyrus Berolinensis 20915.[259] The text is a Sahidic translation of a Greek treatise on creation and escha-

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the doubts concerning authenticity.

[250] Wordsworth 1899, 23.

[251] ἔνγονος, a rare unassimilated variant of ἔγγονος. Normally the word means *descendant* or *grandson*, also in this form, see e.g. Institut für Papyrologie, Universität Heidelberg s.a., a tax roll. Here it's clearly an antonym of ἄγονος *barren*, *childless*, so the meaning must be *productive*, see Liddell & Scott 1996, 467, ἔγγονος 3; they give only one example, but it is from a contemporary writer, sophist Callistratus (3rd–4th century).

[252] Gen 1:26.

[253] John 1:1.

[254] Barn. 5:5.

[255] 1 Cor 1:24 cited as if from Romans.

[256] 1 Tim 1:17 with σοφῷ (א² D¹ 𝔐 Epiph). Notably, along with Epiphanius, this is an early witness for the textual form. In addition to the text, also Wobbermin 1898, 21, cites here incorrectly "Rm. XVI 27 (IX 5)."

[257] John 1:18, cf. Exod 3:14 LXX.

[258] Translation my own, text from Wobbermin 1898, 21: φαμὲν οὖν πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀπαιδεύτων δυσφημίαν· ἔνγονος ὁ πατὴρ ἀεὶ οὐκ ἄγονος, καὶ λογικὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἀεὶ οὐκ ἄλογος, καὶ σοφὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἀεὶ οὐκ ἄσοφος· τίνι γὰρ εἶπεν "ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν," οὐχὶ τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ· καὶ γὰρ "θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος" κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ κατὰ ἰωάννην. ὁ γὰρ τιμιώτατος βαρνάβας ὁ ἀπόστολος, ἐπικληθεὶς υἱὸς παρακλήσεως, ἐν τῷ ἐπιστολῇ αὐτοῦ "τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ," φησίν, "ἔλεγεν 'ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν.'" ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ ἱερὸς ἀπόστολος ἐν τῇ πρὸς ῥωμαίους λέγει· "χριστὸς θεοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεοῦ σοφία" καὶ πάλιν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἐπιστολῇ λέγει· "σοφῷ θεῷ ἀοράτῳ μόνῳ δόξα καὶ τιμὴ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας ἀμήν." ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ κατὰ ἰωάννην εὐαγγελίῳ λέγει· "θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε, ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο·" κόλπος δέ ἐστιν τὸ ὅλον μέγεθος τοῦ σώματος, – –.

[259] See description in section 2.1.

tology, and might be very early: the editors suggest a 2nd century date, propounding it to be earlier than Clement of Alexandria.[260] It quotes Barn. 6:11–12 twice (141–142 = B-12 = D2, 143–144 = B-6) and 17–18 once (149–150 = B-11 = A5), apparently verbatim. Even with the manuscript being very fragmentary, also the name Barnabas is clearly readable several times.[261] Both the passages quoted from chapter 6, but this is probably due to the subject, creation. It is interesting to note, that the only quotation in Sacramentary 31 was likewise about creation (5:5). The significance of this isn't obvious, though.

4.4.3 Outside Egypt

A stark contrast appears when we move away from the Egyptians. A quote from Eusebius (14:1) was already seen above. His other texts (*Hist. eccl.* 3:25:4, 6:13:6) are no different: he never mentions the epistle without also reminding that it is antilegomena.

Jerome knows the epistle and consideres it to be written by the apostolic Barnabas. Nevertheless he also evaluates it "apocryphal scripture":

> Barnabas the Cyprian, also called Joseph the Levite, ordained apostle to the Gentiles with Paul, wrote one Epistle, valuable for the edification of the church, which is reckoned among the apocryphal writings. (*Vir. ill.* 6)[262]

He refers to the epistle again in his commentary to Ezekiel, again with the same caveat (*Comm. Ezech.* 43:19): "This bull, however, is sacrificed for us, as many places in Scripture indicate, principally the Epistle of Barnabas, which we reckon among apocryphal scriptures."[263] It is unclear what passage Jerome has in mind here, though possibly it is Barn. 8:1–2.

He also cites Barn. 5:9 in *Pelag.* 3:2, but incorrectly attributes it to "Ignatius, an apostolic man and a martyr".[264] On the other hand, he does give the right provenance elsewhere (*Tract. Ps.* 15): "I've read in the Epistle of Barnabas (to whom it pleases to receive this testimony): 'God chose apostles, who were more unrighteous

[260] E.g. Hoek 2003, 85; Schenke Robinson 2004b, 383; 2005, 5.

[261] ⲃⲁⲣ[ⲛⲁⲃⲁ]ⲥ (141 = B-12↑ = D2↑), ⲃⲁⲣⲛⲁ[ⲃⲁⲥ] (143 = B-6→), ⲃⲁⲣⲛⲁ̣[ⲃⲁⲥ] (149 = B11↑ = A5r). See Schenke Robinson 2004a, 282–283, 286–287, 298–299.

[262] Translation from Jackson et al. 1912, 363; Latin can be found from Bareille 1878, 283. Curiously, Elliot 2010, 620, writes about this passage: "Jerome hesitated about the status of the Epistle of Barnabas ('almost a New Testament book' De Vir. Ill. 6)." Despite appearances, this cannot be a translation. The text reads: – – unam ad aedificationem Ecclesiae pertinentem Epistolam composuit, quae inter apocryphas scripturas logitur.

[263] Translation my own, Latin from Bareille 1879, 310, "Vitulum autem qui pro nobis immolatus est, et multa Scripturarum loca, et praecipue Barnabae Epistola, quae habetur inter scripturas apocryphas, nominat."

[264] The translation is from Fremantle et al. 1912, 472.

than all [other] sinners.'"[265] In light of the uncertainty in the quotes, it seems probable that Jerome didn't have the epistle readily available. Perhaps he had read it in the past and was quoting by heart. But one might doubt whether he had read the epistle at all, as it is possible he cites it through Origen (*Cels.* 1:63).[266]

The strongest indication that Jerome used the epistle is that he included it as the last book in his commentary on the meanings of the Hebrew names of the Bible, *De nominibus hebraicis* 119–120. The work is ordered by book, and under the title "De epistola Barnabae" he explains the meanings of 13 names from Abraham to Satan.[267] Inclusion in a biblical commentary seems to imply an authoritative status. But perhaps not for Jerome himself. He starts his introduction to the book saying:

> Philo, a most eloquet Jew, Origen, whom the testimony of Origen also confirms, published a book of Hebrew Names with their etymologies, in the order of the books. It is widely owned in Greek, and libraries of the world are filled with it, so our purpose has been to translate it into Latin language.[268]

After this Jerome relates his own efforts, but this statement is clear in that the work is not originally his own composition. Its base is Origen's edition of an earlier Jewish text. Whether Philo is the original author or not is of no consequence. Important is that the Christian books chosen to be part of this work were selected by Origen and reflect his canon, or list of authoritative books.[269] Removing parts of the original in translation is always a difficult choice, so Jerome needn't have thought very highly of the Epistle of Barnabas to include it. Nevertheless, if Jerome had been strongly against the epistle, he wouldn't have included it. But we already knew that he wasn't.

The Latin version **L** has survived in a 9th century manuscript, but must itself be quite early, because it uses the Old Latin and not Vulgate as its Bible texts. This can be known, because the translation corrects the biblical passages of the epistle to more standard forms.[270] Often very early dates are given, such as the "no later than 3rd century" of Bardy,[271]

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[265]Translation my own, Latin from Morin 1903, 16, "Legi in epistola Barnabae (si cui tamen placet de ea recipere testimonium) quod elegerit Deus apostolos, qui erant super omne peccatum iniquiores."

[266]For more discussion on Jerome's knowledge of the epistle, see Carleton Paget 1994, 254; and especially Prostmeier 1999, 48–51.

[267]For the text, see Migne 1883, 903–904. Some manuscripts of the work omit the epistle, which isn't surprising.

[268]Translation my own, Latin from Migne 1883, 815, "Philo vir disertissimus Judaeorum, Origenis quoque testimonio comprobatur, edidisse librum Hebraicorum Nominum, eorumque elymologias juxta ordinem litterarum e latere copulasse. Qui cum vulgo habetur a Graecis, et bibliothecas orbis impleverit, studii a nostri fuit in Latinam linguam eum vertere."

[269]So also Harnack 1893, 61.

[270]Heer 1908, XXIII, XLII–XLIV; 1909, 221–235.

[271]Bardy 1948, 107, "la date de cette version est inconnue, mais elle ne doit pas être postérieure au III^{e} siècle." also Scorza Barcellona 1975, 74–75.

but this stretches the evidence too much. After all, it took centuries for Vulgate to completely replace the Old Latin versions, so a date as late as the 6th century wouldn't be impossible. Already Harnack reminds that the 2nd to 3rd century dating is "a mere possibility", though one supported by the fact that the evidence for use of the Epistle of Barnabas is mostly early and diminishes later.[272] Heer adds linguistic arguments to support early dating, foremost the absence of of word *salvare* and its cognates, which were possibly later Christian coinage, still missing from for example Tertullian.[273] I consider the 2nd century dating is improbable. Neither of the arguments presented suggest such early date, and it should be remembered that the evidence for the use of the epistle only appears from late 2nd century onward. A 3rd century date is perhaps most probable, though I wouldn't exclude 4th century.

As Eusebius and Jerome don't provide much evidence to the use of the epistle outside of Egypt, **L** might be the best indication of people reading the epistle in the west. It's questionable, though, whether the epistle had an authoritative status even for the translator. Significant changes to the text signal less than canonical status, as is known from the transmission of other early Christian writings.[274] There's no evidence for the use of the epistle in Latin apart from the manuscript it appears in, and based on certain translational choices Heer goes so far as to suggest it was made for private use only.[275] The use of the Epistle of Barnabas outside of Egypt seems to have been marginal.

4.4.4 The Epistle as an Authoritative Writing

To sum up, Alexandrian writers Clement, Origen and Didymus cite the Epistle of Barnabas as an authority. It appears in Codex Alexandrinus (**S**) and Catalogus Claromontanus, again implying authority and wide usage. Yet it's clearly a book on the outskirts of canonicity, read and applied, but not universally accepted even in the Alexan-

[272] Harnack 1904, 303 n. 2, "Es bliebt also die Anfertigung einer lateinischen Übersetzung des Briefes schon im 3. oder gar im 2. Jahrh. eine bloße Möglichkeit, die man vielleicht durch den Hinweis zu stützen vennag, daß der Brief die Periode seines größten Ansehens damals gehabt hat. "

[273] Heer 1908, XLIV–LIX.

[274] E.g. Shepher of Hermas, Heide 2011 There's also signs of textual instability in New Testament books like Jude and Revelation, which were long ἀντιλεγόμενα.

[275] Heer 1908, XXI–XXII. See also Carleton Paget 1994, 255 n. 346, who says that "the words at the beginning of **L** ('Explicit epistola Barnaba') – – almost imply that the translation is consciously an interpretation." But this seems wrong: The words he refers to appear at the end: "EXPLICIT EPISTOLA BARNABaE ·.· JNCIP EPISL IACOBI FELICITER ·.·" At the beginnig there is the counterpart: "EXPLICIT EPISTOLA TERTULLIANI DECIBIS IUDAICIS ·.· JNCIPIT EPISTOLA BARNABaE ·.· FELICITER ·.·" This just seems to be the scribe's way to signal the change of text. See Heer 1908, 1, 16.

drian circles, as the silence of Athanasius (c. AD 298–373) clearly tells.[276] Moreover, even those who cite it as an authority show indications that they might consider it a second tier book—among the ἀντιλεγόμενα to use the terminology of Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3:25:4). That in the codices it is found in the end, after other ἀντιλεγόμενα such as Jude and Revelation, seems to tell a similar story.

Whatever other connotations canonicity carries, surely it is *a measure of use*. Clement was hardly the only Alexandrian in his time to read the epistle, since invoking it by name presumes a level of receptivity in the assumed readership.[277] Also it's noteworthy that none of the Alexandrians, even Athanasius, speak against the writing. It's hard to condemn something that has wide support. Conversly, infrequent usage made it difficult for short books like 2–3 John to gain acceptance.

It's telling than when we move away from Egypt the situation changes. Jerome is aware of the epistle—he did know Didymus in person and Origen in writing after all—but barely knows it. Eusebius speaks against it. And canon lists outside of Egypt, like the Muratorian Canon, don't even have the need to reject it. In later times the epistle seems to fall out of favor in Egypt also.[278]

4.5 On circumcision (Barn 9:6)

It is interesting to note that the author does once mention ethnic groups, and by implication geographical locations (Barn. 9:6):

> Take this again: "Behold, says the Lord, all the nations have uncircumcised foreskins, but this people has an uncircumcised heart." **6**But you will say: "But surely the people were circumcised as a seal!" But every Syrian and Arab and all the idol-worshiping priests are also circumcised; does this mean that they too belong to their covenant? Why, even the Egyptians practice circumcision!

The passage quoted here is Jer 9:25–26, which also makes a list of circumcised peoples: Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab and possibly Arabs.[279] The epistle produces a contemporized list. At face value, this would suggest that these peoples and locations are more or less familiar to the author as well as the original audience, and thus probably both the origin and the destionation would be confined within these borders. Nonetheless, in research this passage has mostly been used to try to eliminate one or more of these locations instead.

[276] Athanasius doesn't mention the Epistle of Barnabas at all in his 39th festal letter, although he does mention Didache and Shepherd of Hermas. For a discussion about Athanasius, see Prostmeier 1999, 57–58.

[277] Thus, contra Shukster & Richardson 1986, 18, it's not a serious objection that Clement and Origen were well-versed in different traditions themselves. The continuing evidence of use in Egypt is overwhelming.

[278] Later indications of its existence are few and far between. See Prostmeier 1999, 59–62.

[279] Cf. Justin *Dial.* 28, Epiphanius *Pan.* 1:30:33:3.

Table 2: The text of Barn. 9:6b.

S	ἀλλὰ	καὶ	πᾶς	Σύρος		καὶ	Ἄραψ	καὶ	πάντες	οἱ	ἱερεῖς	τῶν	εἰδώλων·
H		καὶ	πᾶς	Σύρος		καὶ	Ἄραψ	καὶ	πάντες	οἱ	ἱερεῖς	τῶν	εἰδώλων·
V	ἀλλὰ	καὶ	πᾶς	Σύρος		καὶ	Ἄραψ	καὶ	πάντες	οἱ	ἱερεῖς	τῶν	εἰδώλων·
L	sed	et		Iudaeus	et		Arabs	et	omnes		sacerdotes	idolorum	

S	ἄρα	οὖν	κἀκεῖνοι	ἐκ	τῆς	διαθήκης		αὐτῶν	εἰσίν·	ἀλλὰ	καὶ	οἱ	Αἰγύπτιοι	ἐν	περιτομῇ εἰσίν.
H	ἄρα	οὖν	κἀκεῖνοι	ἐκ	τῆς	διαθήκης		αὐτῶν	εἰσίν·	ἀλλὰ	καὶ	οἱ	Αἰγύπτιοι	ἐμπερίτοκοι	εἰσίν.
V	ἄρα	οὖν	κἀκεῖνοι	ἐκ	τῶν	διαθηκῶν		αὐτῶν	εἰσίν·	ἀλλὰ	καὶ	οἱ	Αἰγύπτιοι	ἐν	περιτομῇ εἰσίν.
L	ergo		et hi		de	testamento			sunt						

Shukster & Richardson have employed this passage to cast doubt on the possibility of Egyptian origin:

> Although no textual variation has been preserved, the genuineness of the phrase describing the Egyptians has been questioned on structural grounds. If we accept that the Egyptian reference is an interpolation, the Syro-Palestinian hypothesis is considerably strengthened, since the resultant text deals only with the Syrians and the Arabs. Ahernatively, even if the Egyptian reference is authentic, one wonders why it was not given primacy of place for the benefit of an Egyptian audience. In either case the verse's emphasis on the circumcision of the Syrians and the Arabs at the expense of the Egyptians would seem to suggest Syro-Palestine as the epistle's likeliest place of origin.[280]

Windisch, through whom Shukster & Richardson get the idea of interpolation, himself says: "These words sound like a gloss – – but they can also be the author's own addition, cf. 1 Cor 1:16."[281] It's true that the language is awkward. Holmes's translation is more graceful, but in fact the author introduces both Syrians and Egyptians with an ἀλλὰ καὶ. Though it is a phrase the author seems fond of (also Barn. 7:3, 9:4, 10:6, 8), the second one seems very abrupt.

Shukster & Richardson are actually incorrect about the lack of textual variation: The Latin version **L** omits the whole sentence.[282] Unfortunately that isn't mentioned by any of the common critical editions before 2018, so being unaware of it is to be expected.[283] This omission in **L** doesn't give support for an interpolation, though, but is one more example of the tendency of **L** to improve the style of the epistle: "the Egyptians" are repositioned to be part of the previous list. Once again **L** provides indirect evidence for the parts of the Greek text it doesn't reproduce. Perhaps a more curious textual variant is that **L** reads "Jew" (Iudaeus) in place of

[280] Shukster & Richardson 1986, 20.

[281] Windisch 1920, 354: "Wie eine Glosse klingen die Worte: ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι ἐν περιτομῇ εἰσιν vgl. Völter I 366, 433; Veil Handbuch 221; doch können sie auch eigener Nachtrag des Vf.s sein vgl. I Cor 1:16." See pages 353–355 for a very comprehensive list of related passages.

[282] Veil 1904, 221, uses this as the basis of secundarity.

[283] The information could be found only from Heer 1908, 57. Prigent & Kraft 1971, 146, show that **L** omits ἐν περιτομῇ, but not the rest. See also Ehrman 2003, 44; Holmes 2007, 408. The day after I had written this section, I received in mail the new Fontes Christiani edition, Prostmeier 2018, 102, which to my delight does report the omission.

"Syrian". In addition there are several minor variants. In table 2 I have collected the text of the latter part of the verse from manuscripts **SHVL**.[284]

The suggestion of Windisch that the mention of Egyptians is an afterthought, like 1 Cor 1:16, is plausible, and certainly would make Egyptian provenance unlikely. But perhaps more probably the second ἀλλὰ καὶ doesn't signal an afterthought but just the opposite, another of the author's clumsy means of highlighting. Contra Shukster & Richardson, the last position on a list is regularly used for emphasis (e.g. Matt 5:3–12, 23:13–33, Rom 2:21–23, 1 Cor 3:6–7, 22–23, 13:13, Jas 3:5–6, 3:15, Rev 18:12–13, Pol. *Phil*. 2:2–3, 9:1), and this habit isn't unknown in the epistle (Barn. 6:10, 15:5, 21:5–6). With this reading, the mention of the Egyptians is the main point, and suggests an Egyptian audience.[285] On balance, the position of the Egyptians in the verse is compatible with multiple reconstructions, and shouldn't be given disproportionate weight.

All the other arguments using this passage have to do with external knowledge about who were in reality circumcised and who were not. According to Vielhauer, priests of the idols were not circumcised except in Eqypt, and also the information about Syrians is wrong.[286] This lack of knowledge about other areas betrays the author as an Egyptian. The reverse is said by Wengst, who tells that circumcision was not practiced by Egyptians in Hellenistic times.[287] If so, the author could be anything but an Egyptian. It apperas that the only part of the verse not contested is the circumcision of Arabs (cf. Philo *QG* 3:48, Josephus *Ant.* 1:12:2, Origen *Cels.* 5:48).

Wengst doesn't make the sources of his claim clear, but it seems that contradicting passages are not hard to find. For example, Philo of Alexandria writes at the very beginning of *De specialibus legibus* (1:1:2):

> –– [T]he circumcision of the genital organs, is very zealously observed by many other nations, particularly by the Egyptians, a race regarded as pre-eminent for its populousness, its antiquity and its attachment to philosophy.[288]

[284] I harmonized minor transcriptoral differences (movable ν, ει ↔ ι, "&" for καὶ etc.). From group **G** I checked only **V**. I considered including the first part of the verse because **P** covers it, but it doesn't contain meaningful variants. One more detail unreported by the critical editions is that **H** actually reads ἐμπερίτοκοι, not ἐμπερίτομοι (*uncircumcised*), for ἐν περιτομῇ. The meaning must be the same, though, since it's hard to imagine a hapax legomenon derivative of τίκτω is meant. As the word makes here neither contextual nor historical sense, it is in any case secondary. For the word, see Lampe 1961, 456. The sources I used were Heer 1908, 9, 57; Codex Sinaiticus Project 2009, 337r; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana s.a., 202 (photo 206); Library of Congress s.a., 44 (image 47).

[285] So e.g. Gunther 1983, 22.

[286] Vielhauer 1978, 612; partially followed by Gunther 1983, 21.

[287] Wengst 1971, 114.

[288] Translation from Colson 1937, 101.

In *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin* 3:47 he tells that Egyptians circumcise both males and females "in the fourteenth (year) of their age".[289] Philo himself disapproves of female circumcision, though his reasons might be foreign to the modern mind. Then he goes on to tell how many nations practice circumcision both to increase fertility and to avoid inflammation in hot climate (*QG* 3:48):

> And that it has pleased some to circumcise themselves through foresight of soul without any ill effect is plain, for not only the Jews but also the Egyptians, Arabs and Ethiopians and nearly all those who inhabit the southern regions near the torrid zone are circumcised.[290]

Although it's sometimes contested,[291] it seems most probable that Philo is a trustworthy source when it comes to the Egyptians. He is also corroborated by Strabo (*Geogr*. 17:2:5 cf. *Geogr*. 16:2:37), who tells that Egyptians—and Jews—practice both male circumcision and female "excision" (ἐκτεμνειν), a word that is not too far from *mutilation*.[292] Egyptian circumcision is also mentioned by Origen and Celsus (*Cels.* 5:41, 47–48 Besides, even if it is sometimes claimed that Philo were wrong about common Egyptians, no one ever goes on to deny that he was an Alexandrian. The same logic could be applied to the Epistle of Barnabas. It's safe to put Wengst's argument against Egyptian provenance to rest.

The case of Syrians is less clear. Already Herodotus (*Hist.* 2:104) says that Syrians are circumcised,[293] but Josephus explicitly denies this (*Ant.* 8:10:3, also *C. Ap.* 1:22):

> Herodotus also says that the Ethiopians had learned the practice of circumcision from the Egyptians, "for the Phoenicians and the Syrians in Palestine admit that they learned it from the Egyptians." Now it is clear that no others of the Syrians in Palestine practise circumcision beside ourselves. But concerning these matters everyone may speak as he sees fit.[294]

Josephus is much nearer to the time of the epistle than Herodotus and probably is to be believed here. Still, there is one aspect of his description that I haven't seen problematized: Who are the "ourselves" (ἡμεῖς)? That Jews are meant is clear from the parallel passage in *C. Ap.* 1:22, but who exactly are Jews? As a test case, let us examine Idumeans. Josephus himself considers Idumeans Jews (*Ant.* 13:9:1):

> Hyrcanus also captured the Idumaean cities of Adora and Marisa, and after subduing all the Idumaeans, permitted them to remain in their country so long as they had themselves circumcised and were willing to observe the laws of the Jews. And so, out of attachment to the land of their fathers, they submitted to circumcision and to making their manner of life conform in all other respects to that of the Jews. And from that time on they have continued to be Jews.[295]

[289] Translation from Marcus 1953, 241.
[290] Translation from Marcus 1953, 243. Cf. *Spec.* 1:1:7.
[291] See e.g. the note in Colson 1937, 615 § 2.
[292] For the text, see H. L. Jones 1932, 152–153.
[293] See Godley 1920, 390–393.
[294] Translation from Thackeray & Marcus 1934, 712–713.
[295] Translation from Marcus 1943, 356–357.

This was by no means a universal opinion. Josephus himself relates that Antigonus II Mattathias called Herod the Great "a half-Jew" because he was an Idumean (*Ant.* 14:15:2).[296] The work De Adfinium Vocabulorum Differentia (Περὶ ὁμοίων καὶ διαφόρων λέξεων), possibly from early 2nd century, quotes an unknown historian Ptolemy as saying that though Idumeans are called Jews, they were originally "Phoenicians and Syrians".[297] Lucan (*Phars.* 3:214–216) lists Idumea among the "nations of Syria" (Syriae populi).[298] *Syrian* itself was an ambiguous designation, which could refer to ethnicity, language or simple geography, and had sometimes pejorative connotations.[299] Although it's not relevant for the time period discussed, it's interesting that contrary to what Josephus seems to think, Idumeans practiced circumcision long before before Hyrcanus.[300]

It seems safe to say that although for Josephus Idumeans were Jews, others might call them Syrians. The same must be true for other converted Jews. In all likelihood when Josephus speaks about "us", he speaks about religion, not ethnicity. After all, he himself uses the ethnic designation Idumean dozens of times. The author of the Epistle of Barnabas wouldn't have been incorrect, had he said that some Syrians were circumcised. But those Syrians would have been Jews by religion, and surely "belong to their covenant" (Barn. 9:6). Like Josephus, the epistle is talking about religion, not ethnicity.

There are couple of ways out. First, Veil conjectures that the original text would have read Idumean (Ἰδουμαιος), which could plausibly either be corrupted to Jew (Ἰουδαῖος → Iudaeus **L**) or be modified to the more general Syrian (Σύρος **SHG**).[301] This isn't impossible, but in the end changes little: Idumeans were Jews by religion, as it's already been discussed. Second, knowing the author isn't above tendentious polemic, it might be suggested that the mention of Syrians is such: Either because they aren't ethnic Jews, and as such not of the original people, or because there were people who were circumcised, but had otherwise abandoned the Jewish way of life. That there were such individuals seems certain, even if all of the textual evidence is for upper class only (cf. 12:5:1–, *Ant.* 15:7:9, 15:8:1, 15:9:5). Nevertheless, it seems more probable that the author was wrong, perhaps misinterpreting a

[296] ἡμιϊουδαῖος, apparently a hapax legomenon. For the text, see Marcus 1943, 660–661.
[297] Quoted in Stern 1974, 356.
[298] See Duff 1928, 130–131.
[299] Isaac 2004, 335–351. For more details on how Idumeans were viewed by Greek and Roman authors, see Marciak 2018, without whom I would have known only Josephus.
[300] See e.g. Levin 2020, 18–19. Cf. Jer 9:25–26.
[301] Veil 1904, 221.

hearsay or repeating outdated information from Jer 9:25–26. It's hard to establish that "every" (πᾶς) Syrian is circumcised using exceptions only.

In the same vein the passage reads that "*all* (πάντες) the idol-worshiping priests" are circumcised (Barn. 9:6). The circumcision of priests in Egypt is well established (cf. Josephus *C. Ap.* 2:13, Epiphanius *Pan.* 1:30:33:3), but evidence from elsewhere is lacking. On the other hand, contemporary negative evidence, like Josephus provides for Syrians, is likewise lacking. But all this is irrelevant: The author doesn't use the *all* (πᾶς) in any mathematical or philosophical sense, but every time as a rhetorical hyperbole or intensifier.[302] It must be a hyperbole here also. That the author knew of circumcised priest is consistent with Egyptian providence, but doesn't exclude any other location.

The comment on circumcision in Barn. 9:6 is somewhat useful for determining providence: The mention of circumcised priests might ever so slightly favor Egypt. More consequential is that the mention of the circumcised Syrians is most probably wrong. If so, the author must have relied on secondary sources, and cannot have been a resident of Syria himself.

4.6 A Botanical Excursus

An intriguing interdisciplinary argument concerning the provenance of the Epistle of Barnabas was put forward by Harris already in 1890.[303] In Barn. 7:8, in the middle of a section on the Yom Kippur goats, we read an aside about a desert plant:

> – – [T]he man in charge of the goat leads it into the wilderness, and he removes the wool and places it upon the bush commonly called rachia (the buds of which we are accustomed to eat when we find them in the countryside; only the fruit of the rachia is sweet).

Apparently the shrub in question is familiar to both the author and the recipients, and hence were it identified it could be used to delimit the possible geographical locations. At best, such argument could be all but decisive for the destination.

After discussing the botanical and medical aspects of the description in detail, including considering some textual variants and suggesting emendations, Harris tells that two plants fit the description—and both are associated with Egypt. The options are *Nitraria tridentata* (= *Nitraria retusa*) and the genus *Cappariideae* (= *Capparis*),

[302] Barn. 2:4, 3:6, 4:1, 5 (addition to Dan 7:7), 6, 9, 10, 5:5, 9, 7:1, 9:7, 11:8, 12:2, 5, 7, 8 2×, 15:6, 7, 8, 19:2 2×, 3, 8, 9, 21:3, 4, 5, 9. For some of these it could be argued that the word also has a denotation, e.g. when the "the whole world" is referref to: Barn. 5:5, 12:7, 15:7, 21:3, 5. To find these I used Goodspeed 1907, 186–188.

[303] Harris 1890.

yet excluding the most familiar species, the caper bush *Capparis spinosa*, which Harris believes the author calls by the name "hyssop" (Barn. 8:6).[304]

Harris's industry in collecting the information in his article must be admired, especially considering the time of writing. Just a few years back I still found this argument unfeasible to evaluate, lacking as I am any expertise in botany. The relevant secondary literature was hard to find and there were no public databases listing geographical distribution of species.

But things have changed in 2017, when Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew launched its Plants of the World Online project. Using this database we find that *Nitraria retusa* is native to the whole North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean and eastward as far as Iran and Pakistan, yet is absent from Northern Mediterranean including Turkey. Species of genus *Capparis* are found in large parts of Africa, Asia and Australia. While most species are native to other regions, varieties of *Capparis cartilaginea*, *Capparis decidua* and *Capparis spinosa* grow around the Mediterranean, with one or more species to be found in all of the possible locations.[305]

Modern distribution isn't necessarily the same as the one in the author's time. Fortunately while I was gathering the infromation above, I also happened to find a couple of archaeobotanical articles relevant to the subject.

Rivera et al. have made a survey of the distribution of *Capparis* in Ancient Near East, considering both archaeological and textual data. While much of the archaeological material is from earlier periods (Palaeolithic onwards), seeds of different species and subspecies of *Capparis* are found both before and after the time of the epistle in areas of modern Egypt, Syria and Turkey. In Israel the most recent find is from Neolithic Jericho, but textual data makes up for it.[306]

For example, Mishnah gives the opinions of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and

[304]Harris 1890, 61–69. He is not alone in identifying hyssop (ὕσσωπον, אֵזוֹב) with *Capparis*, as there are some Bible verses where the normal identification with *Origanum syriacum* seems problematic (1 Kgs 4:33, John 19:28). For discussion, see Zohary 1982, 96–98; Moldenke & Moldenke 1952, 160–162. What the author of the epistle means with the word is of course a separate question from its meaning(s) in the Bible.

[305]Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew s.a. b; s.a. c; s.a. d; s.a. e; s.a. f; s.a. g; s.a. h; s.a. a, One notable shortcoming of this data is that the distribution is only given per country or state, which is quite coarse. In the case of Italy this will be significant, as seen below.

[306]Rivera et al. 2002, 297–307. Unfortunately the species of *Capparis* are not well defined, with different authors using different names and taxonomies, accepting some species and rejecting others, and the species also produce hybrids. When comparing the names in the article with the data from Plants of the World Online, I believe the following identifications to be correct: *C. aegyptia*, *C. zoharyi* → *Capparis spinosa var. aegyptia*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew s.a. f; *C. sicula* → *Capparis spinosa var. canescens*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew s.a. g; *C. orientalis* → *Capparis spinosa var. parviflora*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew s.a. h; Rivera et al. 2002, 302–307, discuss textual data from Israel at length, but most of their biblical passages are debatable and they give no direct references to rabbinic writings, instead citing them through secondary literature.

Rabbi Akiba on tithing the different parts of the plant (m. Ma'as. 4:6):

> – – R. Eliezer says: From the caper, Tithes are taken from stalks, caperberries and caper-flowers. R. Akiba says: Only the caperberries are tithed, because they [alone] count as fruit.[307]

Notably, though, *Capparis* doesn't grow near Rome. Except for the southernmost parts, even in modern times it grows only in a few isolated locations in Italy.[308] While Pliny the Elder speaks about "capparis" in Italy and warns against eating the fruit of imported varieties (*Nat.* 13:44, 20:59), this seems consistent with modern distribution, as he also counts it among "foreign" (peregrinos) plants (20:59).[309]

Unfortunately in case of *Nitraria retusa* there is less data, as it isn't an agricultural plant. The only relevant study I could locate did find a very small amount of *Nitraria retusa* pollen around an oasis near the Dead Sea in a depth consistent with dating before AD 1200 (near the time limit of the study).[310] The discovery hardly tells anything new, so it is best to go with modern data.

There is one more possible identification that has been put forward: Ehrman translates the word (in his edition ῥαχή) as "a blackberry bush"![311] Since Ehrman doesn't give any justification, it's hard to know why this translation was chosen, but it seems possible to me that it originates with an innocent footnote in R. A. Kraft's commentary: "Apparently a thorny bush (7:11) like the blackberry. The witnesses vary somewhat as to its exact name."[312] While it's unclear whether this is a serious proposal on Ehrman's part, it should be noted that different species of blackberry (genus *Rubus*) are found all over the world, and e.g. the so-called holy bramble (*Rubus creticus*) is found around the Eastern Mediterranean.[313] It cannot be the plant mentioned in the epistle, though, because it is not a desert plant.[314]

To sum up, in case of both plants suggested by Harris, Rome is ruled out. In case of *Nitraria retusa* also Asia Minor would be ruled out. While not certain, it seems quite possible that one or the other of these plants suggested by Harris is indeed the "rachia" of the epistle—in any case it isn't blackberry. Unfortunately this

[307] See also m. Demai 1:1. Translation from Danby 1933, 72, brackets in the original. (I much prefer Danby's translation to Neusner's, because I feel the latter cannot really be understood without first learning Rabbinic Hebrew.) For citations to later rabbinic writings, see Löw 1928, 322–331.

[308] Rivera et al. 2002, 306–309, especially figures 21–23.

[309] Miller 1995, has made a suggestion that the variously identified plant "aspalathos" could also be some variety of caper. About aspalathos Pliny tells that it grows in Cyprus (*Nat.* 12:52) and Spain (*Nat.* 24:68). For the texts in Latin and English, see Rackham 1945, 78–79 (12:52), 172–175 (13:44); W. H. S. Jones 1951, 96–99 (20:59); 1956, 80–83 (24:68).

[310] Eggenberger et al. 2018, 655, figure 6.

[311] Ehrman 2003, 39.

[312] R. A. Kraft 1965, 103–104.

[313] Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew s.a. i; s.a. j.

[314] See discussion in Zohary 1982, 140.

doesn't confirm Egypt as the location as he had hoped, since the plants' distributions include most other areas too. Actually Harris brings this possibility up himself: "– – [W]e are obliged to admit that the shrub arak may be found to have a larger botanical habitat."[315]

4.7 Conclusions

It's time to review the evidence. While often discussed, use of allegory and similarities with other writings don't provide any useful indication of provenance. They do, however, suggest that the author was acquainted with broad influences. *Sitz im Leben* is even less useful. The interesting botanical argument by Harris,[316] succeeds in eliminating Rome and perhaps even casting doubt on Asia Minor, yet doesn't differentiate between the more probable regions. The probably incorrect information about Syrians in Barn. 9:6 casts doubt on Syrian providence, but isn't conclusive. While the balance might slighly favor Egypt, it's inconclusive, and in my opinion it is best to accept that the origin of the epistle cannot be reached with the current evidence.

The *destination*, however, is a different thing altogether. If the Epistle of Barnabas is accepted to be a letter, then its destination is primarily to be found in its reception.[317] Unlike the other types of evidence reviewed, reception provided extremely clear results: the epistle was popular in Egypt (or Alexandria), unknown elsewhere.

While it is self-evidently true that "[a] document may be written in one place and acclaimed in another"[318] and that the evidence "doesn't exclude other possibilities",[319] these objections misrepresent the nature of historical study: Rarely, if ever, can absolute certainties and unobjectionable proofs be reached. Lacking those, the next best thing is inference to the best explanation given the available material. And in this case all the material points to Egypt being the destination of the Epistle of Barnabas.

That we can reach this conclusion should be appreciated: Many other conclusions about the epistle are little more than tentative, and even after careful study we must still plead our ignorance concerning plenty of questions. That the destination of the epistle is in Egypt can be concluded with high probability, and this infromation

[315] Harris 1890, 70 (arak = *Capparis*).
[316] Harris 1890.
[317] So also Bartlet 1899, 376: "Its subsequent literary history is decisive on the point".
[318] Carleton Paget 1994, 32; he ends up supporting Alexandria/Egypt anyway, 36–42.
[319] Wengst 1980, 116: "– – die andere Möglichkeiten nicht ausschließt."

could be used as a basis for the reconstruction of the epistle's *Sitz im Leben*.[320]

[320]Contra S. G. Wilson 1995, 127; and Hvalvik 1996, 41–42, who conclude that agnosticism about the origin must also be a methodological starting point and insist on an exegesis of the epistle independent of its provenance. While rational in a way, in light of the above it seems unnecessary. From a different framework, Carleton Paget 1994, 36–42; and Prostmeier 1999, 128–130, reach a conclusion similar to mine.

5 Summary

Its time to review the findings and evaluate their significance for possible further research. In addition I will here state what parts of the study include contributions of my own.

In section 2 first the textual witnesses of the Epistle of Barnabas were reviewed (2.1). The subsection didn't contain anything original, but it supplements the earlier accounts by adding the recently published Papyrus Berolinenesis 20915, which quotes the epistle verbatim.

Next the unity of the text was addressed (2.2). The study of Muilenburg in my view indisputably shows the stylistic unity of the text and the integral part the Two Ways material plays in the author's thinking. The Latin version **L** shows clear indications of secondarity, and its endings retains signs that show it was translated from a version which included the Two Ways. In light of the unity of style, interpolatory theories are implausible and should be rejected. The author used sources, but the linguistic evidence also shows that he didn't reproduce them slavishly. Here too my contribution is mostly limited to reproducing the work of others.

The form of a text 2.3 plays a significant role in determining the *Sitz im Leben*. Accordingly, in the study of the Epistle of Barnabas the judgment that it is a "treatise" has often come with the conclusion that it has no real occasion, beyond the author wanting to disseminate eternal truths. Though it is sometimes suggested that the epistle is following a literary convention, there are no clear parallels: pseudepigraphical letters include names, the Epistle of Barnabas doesn't. The claim that the author doesn't seriously try to make an appearance of a letter doesn't seriously try to take into account the recurrent professions of love and other intimate language the author uses. Older theories of letter tended to require fullfillment of rigid formal and stylistic features. More modern views were quoted mainly through Doering. In their light, the epistle is clearly a letter, yet not necessarily an authentic one. The author's personal remarks make a genuine impression, but the letter doesn't fully conform to literary conventions of letters. Unless a convincing hypothesis to explain these features is provided, the text must be accepted as a genuine letter. My contribution was limited to trying and failing to search parallels for the epistle, apart from that I presented the efforts of others.

In section 3 the arguments for dating were evaluated. The epistle must be dated after AD 70 because the destruction of the Jerusalem temple is mentioned in Barn. 16:3–4. Clement of Alexandiria provides the latest possible time, but almost surely

the latest possible date is much earlier, at the end of the Bar Kokhba war AD 135, since it isn't mentioned. More precise datings are based on interpreting the allusions in Barn. 4:4–6a and 16:3–4.

Barn. 16:3–4 mentions a rebuilding of the destroyed temple (3.2). This has been interpreted either as a rebuilt Jewish temple, the spiritual building of a Christian or the temple of Jupiter in Aelia Capitolina built by Hadrian. The spiritual building doesn't fit the context and should be rejected. Rebuilt Jewish temple would be an excellent solution, but is problematic because a probable historical context cannot be found. The temple of Jupiter mentioned by Cassius Dio has often been seen the best solution, but the existence of temple is often rejected in recent Bar Kokhba research. Eliav is exemplary of this, and rejects the Cassius Dio reference as an ahistorical modification by the abridger Xiphilinus. Either Jewish or pagan temple would fit the text, but have problems on historical grounds. I made a preliminary suggestion which would date the Jupiter temple before the war.

Barn. 4:4–6a recounts with some modifications the Danielic (7:7–8, 24) prophecy of ten kings, where one king replaces three (3.3). Three triads were considered: Galba, Otho and Vitellius (next Vespasian), Vespasian, Titus and Domitian (Nerva) and Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian (Antoninus Pius). While scholarly suggestions have contained much imaginative number juggling, they are not implausible, because the original author is expected to have done likewise. Based on this passage only, the reign of Vespasian would be best and reigns of Domitian, Nerva and Hadrian conceivable.

Dome additional arguments were considered (3.4) and judged of little weight. The reconstruction of Rothschild that dates the epistle beyond AD 200 was reviewed and rejected. In sum, it's best to accept the range AD 70–135. More precise datings cannot be adequately justified. In this section I largely repeated the arguments of others. As the arguments of Eliav and others against the Hadrian temple seem unknown in Barnabas research, introducing them can be seen as my contribution. I also made the tentative suggestion of dating the temple before the war, but that needs to be substantiated in future research to have value. The arguments against the reconstruction of Rothschild were mine, but amounted to little more than stating the obvious.

In section 4 an effort was made to take seriously the implications of the epistolary form of the text: origin and destination are separate questions. The material was organized based on the types of arguments used, not by geography as usual. This allowed the observation that certain types of evidence are weak to the point of use-

lessness: This applies foremost to reconstructions of *Sitz im Leben* (4.3), which due to their circular nature can only provide plausible descriptions of the location they already presuppose. The epistle's similarities to other texts in content and style (4.2) doesn't have a comparable epistemological weakness, but in practice the epistle exhibits such a wide range of influences that it cannot be used to determine provenance.

The reception of the epistle up to the 4th century was examined in detail (4.4). In contrast to the previous categories, reception is highly concentrated to one location, Egypt: Outside of Egypt only Eusebius, Jerome and the Latin translation **L** show an acquintance with the text. None of them probably held it as an authority. In Egypt the epistle is witnessed by Clement, Origen, Didymus, Codex Sinaiticus, Clermont List and two anonymous texts. While many of these show indications of not granting the epistle the full status of scripture, it's clear that in Egypt it was long recognized as authoritative.

The comment on the circumcision of different peoples (4.5, Barn. 9:6) is often cited to demonstrate Syrian provenance, but was revealed to be an argument against it, and perhaps mildly supporting Egypt. With the emergence of botanical databases in the Internet it was finally possible to evaluate the over century old botanical argument of Harris (4.6). While it didn't prove Egypt as the place of origin in the way he had hoped, it does exclude Rome and throws doubt on Asia Minor.

The probably incorrect information about the circumcision of the Syrians casts doubt on Syrian origin, and the botanical argument of Harris excludes Rome. While Egypt might be slightly favored, the evidence isn't conclusive and the question of origin must be left undecided. The destination, on the other hand, is all but confirmed to be in Egypt by the later reception. As firm conclusions about the epistle are hard to come by, the strong case for Egyptian destination is the most significant contribution of this work.

While I do reproduce many old arguments, both the arrangement and the conclusions in this section are my own. To my knowledge, the argument of Harris has never before been properly analyzed. Also the treatment of reception contains new material, especially in the analyses of Papyrus Berolinenesis 20915 and the text About Father and Son (Sacramentary 31). The latter has almost completely missed the eyes of the scholars, to the point that the few things said here might be the fullest treatment in a century. Though the phenomenon of signaling differing degrees of auhtority with different degrees of precision in citations isn't unknown in the study of other texts, the observations here were my own, and would be an interesting sub-

ject for further research.

In the end, I'm confident that this work has fulfilled its limited goals. The precise date of the epistle was confirmed undecidable unless new evidence or viewpoints are brought forward, and consequently shouldn't be heavily leaned on. The origin remains unknown, but has perhaps little to offer for any reconstruction anyway. The unity of the text is confirmed, and the form is in my view best explained by regarding it as a genuine letter. The destination of the epistle was demonstrated to be almost certainly somewhere in Egypt. These might not be gigantic achievements, but in the uncertain world of Barnabas research I am happy to be able to give some results with high certainty.

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In case of the Epistle of Barnabas itself, the division between primary and secondary literature is quite arbitrary. Many editions and translations contain extensive introductions and commentaries, and are mainly cited because of those. I categorized as primary sources those which give a complete and continuos text, even if commentary takes more space.[321] Others I categorized as secondary even if they do contain the complete text.[322]

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[321] E.g. Windisch 1920.
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